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Kent on Sunday

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WEEKLY FREE NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

East edition No 643

EDF ENERGY London and South of England Media Awards

WEATHER

Snow joke - it's going to get cold

After the wind and the rain, temperatures are set to drop

TRANSPORT

Southeastern boss on London Bridge work

We speak to chief as commuters face headache at terminal

SPORT

Who will be the Gills' next manager?

We look at the runners and riders for the hotseat

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Snow joke for our A&Es if county turns white

WHEN you're young, snow represents all that is best with Mother Nature.

It was her little gift to pick up our spirits as we struggled through winter and continued to mourn the passing of Christmas.

The crisp crunch under foot, the brilliant whiteness which seemed to soften all the every day noise, and the exquisite beauty of tumbling snow flakes falling thick and fast. It was a wonderous sight to behold. Not to mention the delight of snowballs and snowmen.

Throw in a day off school and life rarely got better.

Today, however, while the child in me still cannot suppress a shiver of excitement at the sight of a blanket of snow falling, the reality of adulthood means it's hard not to see past the issue of having to drive on ice-caked roads or rue the decision not to get the car



Editor **Chris Britcher**

serviced when the sun was out.

But after barely a flake last year, the forecast suggests if we don't get some this weekend, it may be just around the corner.

Which, given the strain recently on our A&E hospital departments, it seems almost inevitable that by adding to high demand a host of people who received an icy snowball on their hooter or slipped over and broke their ankle on an uncleared driveway, there will be another crisis.

So far, our hospitals in Kent have coped well with the increased demand, but

the prospect of snow and ice is unlikely to ignite the same delight for the local NHS staff as it does school children. Inside we speak to staff about how they've coped so far and what the root of the spike could be.

So keep warm, stay safe, don't go to A&E unless it's a genuine emergency, and make sure you have a great weekend.

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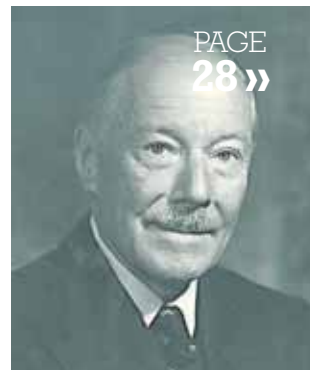
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First wind and rain, but is snow now sweeping in?

by Chris Britcher

chris.britcher@archant.co.uk

STORMS swept across the county at the end of the week, bringing chaos to the roads and rails - and there are fears this weekend will see temperatures plummet and the chance of snow sweeping in.

The Met Office says there is a chance of 'prolonged snow' between Sunday and Tuesday in the region, prompting fears we could be plunged into a cold snap.

This week saw wind speeds of up to 75mph whip the south coast, forcing ferries to be cancelled or delayed from Dover. As a consequence, as freight transport stacked up, police put Operation Stack into place on Wednesday night, and the M20 between Maidstone and Ashford turned into a giant lorry park until Thursday lunchtime.

Congestion on the A-roads followed as a consequence.

Meanwhile, on the rails, a lorry struck a bridge at Chestfield which caused the Faversham line to be closed on Thursday morning.

The Environment Agency issued a number of flood warnings as



WEATHER: Will we be making snowmen later this week?

heavy rainfall swelled rivers and many roads found themselves under water. Areas around Ashford were particularly affected - including key routes between the town and Faversham and Canterbury.

Yalding, worst hit by the flooding last winter, was also once again bracing itself for trouble, with a flood warning on Friday.

Near Faversham, a woman and two children had to be rescued by emergency teams after their car

became trapped in floodwater on Thursday night.

Crews were called to Selling Road, between Neames Forstal and Oversland, where the car had become stuck with water up to the gear box.

Now, after the rain and wind, the Met Office says we can expect to see what has been a relatively mild spell turn chilly as temperatures drop.

With the wind chill factor, it says the temperature today will feel

below zero, with the prospect of some wintry showers.

A spokesman said the forecast for the next few days was cold, with further wintry showers and sunny periods.

"Showers are most likely during Sunday, perhaps with some prolonged snow for a time. There will be widespread overnight frosts, locally severe," he added.

For all the latest see www.kentnews.co.uk.

Family's terror as e-cig explodes and sets fire to children's bedroom

A FATHER who had to call fire crews after an electric cigarette he was charging at his home exploded and sent flames shooting across the room has spoken of his terror.

Mark Stockdale, from Teynham, had been charging the cigarette in his children's bedroom when the drama occurred. It left him with burns to his fingers and palm, as well as igniting his home.

He said: "I can't believe how lucky I was. It had only been on charge about 10 minutes, when I heard a swooshing noise. The next minute it exploded in my hand, shooting flames across the room and setting the bedding alight.

"I dread to think what could have happened if I'd left it charging and gone out or if we'd been asleep. It could've killed us and gutted our home."

Kent Fire and Rescue Service (KFRS) was called to the bungalow in London Road last Friday afternoon, January 9, just after 2.30pm and found the fire was already out.

Firefighters treated Mr Stockdale for burns until paramedics arrived.

KFRS community safety manager, Charlie Smith, said: "If your New Year's resolution is to quit smoking and you're using an e-cigarette to help you, please make sure you know how to charge it safely."

The warning comes a month after a house fire in Sheerness was thought to have been started by an e-cigarette being charged incorrectly. On that occasion, the blaze caused severe damage to a bedroom and extensive smoke damage to the upstairs of a home in Alexandra Road.

Mr Smith added: "You might save a few pounds if you buy cheap or incompatible chargers but is it really worth putting your family or home at risk?"

"If your e-cigarette doesn't come with a charger, please don't assume that your USB cables can be transferred between devices. Chargers for mobile phones are often more powerful, so can overheat."

Hundreds caught by M25's 'smart' speed cameras

HUNDREDS of drivers on the M25 near Sevenoaks have been caught by so-called 'smart' speed cameras since their introduction just two months ago.

The cameras have caught 700 drivers speeding. Some 520 were breaking the 70mph limit, while the rest were exceeding variable speed limits on the stretch.

Unlike traditional speed cameras,

the gantry devices use digital technology.

This allows them to scan four separate lanes at the same time - traditional cameras can only be trained on one lane at a time.

Known as the Highways Agency Digital Enforcement Camera System, they have been in operation between junctions five and six of the motorway.

No challenge to sentence of teacher who had sex with pupil

AN 18-MONTH suspended sentence for a teacher who had sex with a 16-year-old schoolgirl will not be investigated by the Attorney General's office, it was confirmed on Thursday.

Stuart Kerner, 44, from Aylesford, received the sentence for two counts of sexual activity with a child by a person in a position of trust while working at Bexleyheath Academy.

A spokesperson for the Attorney General said: "We carefully considered whether the sentence could be referred to the Court of Appeal for being too low - as part of the 'unduly lenient sentence scheme'.

"Kerner's crimes are not included in this scheme, meaning the law officers are unable to refer this."



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Pub Landlord to stand for South Thanet seat

POPULAR comedian Al Murray - best known for his creation the Pub Landlord - confirmed he is to stand against Nigel Farage in Thanet at May's general election.

Mr Farage is hoping to win the South Thanet seat for Ukip after it is vacated by Tory Laura Sandys.

But he will be challenged by a comic whose no-nonsense character is based upon a love of all

things traditionally British. His party? The Free United Kingdom Park, or FUKP for short.

Manifesto pledges include bricking up the Channel Tunnel and lowering the cost of beer to just 1p a pint. The 46-year-old said: "It seems to me that the UK is ready for a bloke waving a pint around, offering common sense solutions."



GOING: Sir Hugh Robertson

MP confirms he is to quit Westminster

SIR Hugh Robertson, MP for Faversham and Mid Kent, has announced he will stand down from Parliament at the 2015 general election.

The Conservative politician has held the safe seat since 2001. He will be best remembered for being sports minister during the London 2012 Olympic Games.

He was also minister for the Middle East, North Africa and counter terrorism, getting involved in the Middle East peace process.

He said: "It has been a huge privilege to represent my own home area for the past decade and a half."

"I am very grateful for the hard work and support of the many friends in my association who enabled me, firstly, to win my seat in 2001 and then to double my majority twice in 2005 and 2010."

"As a minister, I was fortunate to have two very different jobs, both of which I enjoyed enormously," he said.

"However, having reached my 52nd birthday and with five year Parliaments now part of the political landscape, this is realistically the last opportunity to move on and pursue a new career outside of Parliament."

"Both David Cameron and the Conservative Party will continue to have my full and active support."

Land deal agreed as £2bn London Paramount park edges closer to reality

by **Jamie Weir**

jamie.weir@archant.co.uk

PLANS for the £2 billion London Paramount entertainment complex took a stride forward this week as the owner of the land signed a deal to sell it to the park's developer.

The multi-million pound deal will see the 388-acre former cement works site, once the biggest in the UK until it closed in 1993, on the Swanscombe peninsula sold by Lafarge Tarmac to London Resort Company Holdings (LRCH), the company driving forward with development of the park.

Expected to ultimately become one of the biggest parks of its kind in Europe, the resort will feature, if all goes to plan, a major theme park, more than 5,000 hotel rooms, and major entertainment facilities such as venues and conferencing.

It is expected to generate some 27,000 new jobs, and would attract around 50,000 visitors a day. A licensing deal with movie studio Par-



PLANS: How park will look

amount will give it access to a range of major brands such as Star Trek, Titanic and Mission: Impossible.

The land straddles Dartford and Gravesham boroughs.

With public consultations already under way, the 'binding option agreement' announced this week will allow plans to progress as planned.

David Testa, executive director of LRCH said: "It further underlies our commitment to delivering the project and is welcome news as we continue to consult and engage with the local Dartford and Gravesham communities living near the site and more widely with our interested parties."

Two stages of public consultation have been held by LRCH to date, involving over 4,000 members of the Kent community. A further two further stages of consultation are planned before LRCH intends to submit a draft development consent order in autumn 2015. It is hoped to open by Easter 2020.

See our website www.kentnews.co.uk to see our essential guide to the Paramount London resort and all the latest news or go direct - <http://bit.ly/1E42twd>.

Mystery cat strolls onto police firing range

The RSPCA is appealing for information after a tabby cat took a walk on the wild side, strolling past a firing range and into a police training centre in Gravesend.

The adult tabby and white male cat was spotted at the centre in Mark Lane last Thursday and quickly made himself at home with the security guards at the gatehouse for a few days.

Staff fed him and cared for him as they tried to find an owner.

It is currently a bit of a mystery where the cat came from, as the centre is in a remote area far from any homes.

Leanne Ferguson, security team leader, said: "We're so far out here I just have no idea where he came from."

Ms Ferguson took the cat, thought to be around two or three years old, to a vet on Monday.

The RSPCA were called and the cat, who is in good health, is being looked after by them until his owner can be traced.

Farage book details 'Purple Revolution'

UKIP leader Nigel Farage has written an explosive new book which promises to reveal how the party has been stealthily trying to poach MPs from other parties.

Independent publisher Biteback, run by Pembury-based political expert and radio presenter Iain Dale, will be publishing *The Purple Revolution: The Year That Changed Everything* in March. The company has also published Mr Farage's autobiography, *Flying Free*.

Mr Dale said: "We know people are desperate to learn more about Nigel Farage as a man and what he stands for. This is a book that could influence the outcome of the election."

The publisher says the book tells "the untold story of the journey UKIP has travelled under Farage's leadership, from the icy fringes of British politics all the way to Westminster, where it is poised to claim the popular vote."

Mr Farage, who lives in Westerham, will be competing to win the South Thanet seat at the May general election.

Row brews over 580 new homes proposal

COUNTRYSIDE campaigners are warning that proposals submitted for 580 new homes off Swanstree Avenue in Sittingbourne would cause severe damage to the countryside.

CPRE Kent - the county branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England - says that the scheme would be a disaster for the countryside - designated as a Special Landscape Area.

The proposal would see land developed between Sittingbourne and Rodmersham Green - an area described by those against the plans as "a vital green gap".

The plans have been submitted by Gladman Developments Ltd and will be considered by Swale Borough Council over the coming weeks.

Senior planner for CPRE Kent, Brian Lloyd, said: "This is an attempt by the developer to undermine the new Swale Local Plan by seeking to get planning permission for a greenfield site that has been rejected by the council in its new plan."

"There is no justification for giving up precious high quality land for development."

agenda

What will make next week's headlines...

KCC to discuss budget challenge for 2015/16

KENT County Council chiefs will examine the proposed draft budget for 2015/16 and plot their medium term financial plan at County Hall this week.

The growth, economic development and communities cabinet committee meets on Thursday faced with the task of balancing the

county's books after yet another round of deep cuts from central government.

The committee will take on board issues raised during the budget consultation. It will then make recommendations ahead of the cabinet meeting on January 28 and a meeting of full council on



February 12.

Savings of £96 million are needed this year alone - on top of £269m shaved off its budgets by Whitehall over the last three years.

RSPB gets set for annual Big Garden Birdwatch

THE RSPB's annual Big Garden Birdwatch returns next weekend.

Last year around 500,000 people took part across the UK, tasked with simply monitoring and recording all the birds they saw in their back garden over a one-hour period over the weekend.

The survey gives the charity a snapshot of the health of the nation's bird population.

For the second year running the RSPB is also asking participants to share details of what other wildlife they see outside.

Find out how to register at www.rspb.org.uk/birdwatch.

...also

Castle's hedge laying

SISSINGHURST Castle's popular hedge laying course returns later this month.

The all-day course runs from 9.30am to 4pm on January 30 and will provide those attending with all the information to help make the perfect hedge.

No police Unison strike

KENT Police staff will not be involved in a 24-hour strike on Friday in an on-going row over pay.

Union Unison has called out its members across England and Wales. It does not include officers.

TV drama films here

PENSHURST Place and Dover Castle can be spotted in a new TV drama on Wednesday after scenes were shot on location.

They feature in the six-part Wolf Hall about Thomas Cromwell's meteoric rise in the Tudor court. It's on at 9pm.

CCG agenda available

THE first meeting of the year of NHS Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley CCG's governing body takes place on January 27.

The agenda can be downloaded from Tuesday by visiting the website dartford-gravesendswanleyccg.nhs.uk.



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Funding cuts hit grammar schools hard

By Maria Chiorando
maria.chiorando@archant.co.uk

A-LEVEL subjects like languages, music and even physics could become a thing of the past in grammar schools because of funding cuts made to education providers, according to experts.

Reforms made to the 16 to 19-year-old funding formula means that sixth forms are now paid per student rather than per subject taught, and these cuts mean that students could also face bigger class sizes of up to 30 students and less teaching staff.

Damian Green, MP for Ashford has claimed that it is grammar schools that are "appallingly affected by the unfairness in the funding system", a sentiment echoed by fellow Tory, Dartford MP Gareth Johnson.

Speaking to KoS, Mr Johnson said: "Unintended consequences mean there is a disproportionate impact on grammar schools. We are very proud of our grammar schools in Kent."

"Grammar schools have been

worse hit because their proportionally larger sixth form sizes mean the cuts will have a bigger impact, as funding for under-16s is more generous, giving the schools less opportunity to reallocate budgets."

For this reason, non-selective schools with large sixth forms would also suffer.

On top of this, grammar schools are unlikely to benefit for the extra funding available for students with low prior attainment or deprivation.

David Anderson is the head teacher of Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School in Faversham, and a committee member of the Kent and Medway Grammar Schools Heads' Association.

He said: "The association did a survey, and found out that these cuts are having an impact across all grammar schools. We have seen funding cuts from £5,010 per student to £4,300, and this is set to drop to around £4,000. These issues are across the board, and we are concerned that in the future, some grammar schools will face insolvency, or have to take extreme measures."

There have been claims that a so-



called 'posh pupil premium', where students who have attained all grade B or above at GCSE, could be awarded an additional £400-£800 funding in order to study an extra A-level, a policy that would almost certainly benefit grammar schools.

However, according to Mr Anderson this premium does not actually exist yet, and is currently just an idea that is being discussed.

He said: "We are all in a position where we are finding budgets are tighter, and we are having to make staff redundancies."

Former Gravesend headteacher

Peter Read, who is now an education advisor, waded into the debate, describing the cuts as "dreadful". He said: "It is minority subjects that will suffer, as if there are less than 12 students taking a course, it will no longer be financially viable to run."

"Subjects such as English and maths will be ok, but subjects like languages, and even physics could bite the dust - it would be a tragedy as we need these subjects."

"Those in charge of education policy are going to have to make very difficult decisions and there are no areas that can be comfortably cut. With

this one in particular, I think the consequences are very visible. I would hate to have to choose which bits of funding to cut myself though."

A Department of Education spokesman said: "We have protected the schools' budget in real terms - allowing us to ensure all councils are receiving the same amount per pupil as in 2010. It is down to councils to determine exactly how that funding is given to individual schools, but we have made sure that no school's budget falls by more than 1.5 per cent from one year to the next."

"All state schools, including gram-

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BUDGET CUTS: Could see class sizes grow



mar schools, are funded in exactly the same way. We have ended the historic and unfair funding difference between post-16 schools and colleges by funding them per student, rather than discriminating between qualifications. These changes affect all post-16 schools and colleges, so it is not true to say this has 'unintended consequences' on grammar schools.

"We have also increased funding for those that successfully study four or more A-levels and large TechBacc programmes, giving schools and colleges the green light to further help their most able students."

Family 'heartbroken' at death

More than 40,000 had joined a Facebook site hoping to find him, but last Sunday hope was extinguished as the body of Pat Lamb was found in the River Medway. **Molly Kersey** speaks to his girlfriend at the end of a traumatic and tragic week.

TRIBUTES have poured in this week after the body of missing Pat Lamb was formally identified after being found in the River Medway last weekend.

Mr Lamb, 28, who had grown up in Whistable and Canterbury, had gone missing after a night out in Maidstone on December 13, sparking a massive hunt to find him.

The last sighting of him on CCTV saw him walking in the direction of the Medway.

Police recovered his body from Cuxton marina last Sunday after it was spotted by a passer-by. His remains were formally identified on Wednesday. A report has now been sent to the coroner. An inquest to establish the cause of death is expected to be opened soon. His phone and wallet were found on his body.

Spearheading the campaign was his girlfriend of six years, Natasha Morgan, whom he shared a home with in Greenhithe.

Speaking to KoS this week, a devastated Ms Morgan said: "This news is so heartbreaking for everyone who loved him and for everyone he loved. He was taken too soon from us and my heart will be forever broken."

"He was a special person and it is the little things I will miss. I keep expecting him to walk through the door and say 'hello muffin'."

Harnessing social media, more than 40,000 people had followed a Facebook page set up to try and find him.

A subsequent online petition, set up by Cathleen Breen of Orpington, has already secured 2,000 signatures calling for the banks of the Medway to be fenced off to "prevent more tragic and unnecessary deaths".

It is not the first time a reveller has gone missing after falling into the river.

Kieron Knowlden, 25, a father-of-one from Tonbridge was recovered from the river last March after going missing for two weeks.

Chief Inspector Susie Harper of Kent Police said: "I would like to reiterate my thanks to all those who have supported the search for Patrick."

"This includes Kent Search and Rescue, and the many people who have shared appeals for information via social media, and volunteers who gave up their own time to assist with the search."

"We would ask that they are now left to grieve in private."

■ **For all the latest news see our site www.kentnews.co.uk.**



TRAGIC: Pat Lamb had been missing since December 13

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UNVEILING: Coalition minister Eric Pickles revealed the new measures earlier this week



Will £1m fund help crack down on those flouting planning laws?

Eric Pickles this week unveiled councils could dip into a special cash pot available to them to help take those seriously abusing planning regulations to court. **Jamie Weir** looks at what it will mean

FOR anyone involved in the planning process on councils in our county, the issues of the unscrupulous building without the correct planning permission is nothing new.

Build and the chances are you'll be granted retrospective permission – too late of course for any local objections to be lodged – or face a lengthy legal battle which can Hoover up thousands of pounds of local taxpayer money.

However, this week, the government announced a new pot of cash for councils – the Planning Enforcement Fund – which will help to pay up to £10,000 per case to challenge development which 'seriously' flouts planning rules.

It hopes to tackle everyone from those adding unauthorised home extensions to those building much larger developments.

While this happens across the county, the decision over which cases to pursue is becoming a tougher call to make with central government funding constantly eroding the local authority's public purse.

An example was when Gravesham Borough Council took a traveller couple to court after they moved their mobile home onto land without gaining the necessary consent. The case was won, but at a cost.

The legal costs of getting a court injunction can easily consume up to £13,000. All of which means this new envelope of money has become of

greater significance to cash-strapped local authorities.

Alec Lauder – development control manager at Dartford Borough Council – explained: "There's every prospect we'll use this fund, as although we don't use injunctions very often, they are extremely useful when we do."

"In the past we have had to really think about taking out an injunction and sometimes it has put us off as they can be extremely expensive, and especially now, as local authority budgets are decreasing, it's becoming more important to keep costs down."

Paul Watkins is the Conservative leader of Dover District Council. He told KoS: "It's great that the resources are being put in to help enforcement of the planning system, as historically this has been hampered by insufficient resources. Planning enforcement is an important part of ensuring that the right development goes in the right place."

Planning charity the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) is also pleased that money is being pumped in to making sure illegal development is stopped.

Brian Lloyd is the senior planner at the charity's Kent branch.

He told KoS: "We need to ensure residents are protected from inappropriate development ruining their home environment and threatening our countryside."

"The planning system is there for a reason and should be adhered to. We

hope this fund will mean more action is taken in Kent against people who believe they can ignore the planning system and nothing will be done. We call on authorities to take decisive action at an early stage, if necessary by taking out court injunctions."

According to figures from central Government, over the last 10 years there have been an average 60 court injunctions to stop unauthorised development ordered across the UK each year. It's not a lot, but it is a last resort.

But fighting unauthorised development is only part of the positive aspect on the new funding according to Cllr Watkins.

The Dover leader said: "The new resources are positive, but that's only one side of the coin. Another element of this is that it helps to redress the criticism that the government's new planning system is loaded in favour of developers, and will always say yes to development. But this shows that actually, the government is willing to help councils get tough on development when it shouldn't be happening."

That is also the message from the minister for communities and local government – which announced the new fund – Eric Pickles.

He said: "We believe in putting power back in the hands of local communities and empowering councils to take action against those who do not play by the rules."

"Councils should not be afraid of using court injunctions for serious plan-

ning breaches and this new £1 million enforcement fund gives councils extra resources in the fight against unauthorised development."

"The public rightly expects fair play in the planning system. Law-abiding residents follow the rules and obtain planning permission so they find it galling to see others who don't. That's why we set up this new fund to help councils act swiftly to stop unauthorised development."

But while many are celebrating the funding, others point out that the pot is relatively small and the ability to access the funding only when a court injunction is necessary.

A spokesman for Gravesham council said: "We will draw on this fund if necessary. However court injunctions are rare and only used as a last resort."

The council spokesman also pointed out that the pot of cash seemed small on a national scale.

He said: "The sum will fund 90 such cases nationwide for a year so it's spread across 300-plus local authorities. So, less than one apiece."

■ Do you think this will work? Share your views and join the debate. Write to: The Editor, KoS, Kent House, 81 Station Road, Ashford TN23 1JJ. Or email us at editorial@kosmedia.co.uk.

MEASURES IN THE ARSENAL

PERMITTING planning consent for development is one of the key tasks of local authorities.

They have power over all work in their areas; a balancing act of progress and protection.

To tackle unauthorised developments, they have a variety of enforcement measures.

Temporary Stop Notices can be used to stop any development dead in its tracks. These can be used by councils while they investigate the development or build a case against it.

Enforcement notices can be served against those ignoring

planning rules. These will set out what the planning breach is, what needs to be done to correct it, and the timeframe to do so. If ignored, the offender can be prosecuted and fined up to £20,000.

Stop notices can only be issued after an enforcement notice has been issued. They instantly stop further development, and may, in exceptional cases, require removal of development. There is no right of appeal, and it is an offence to breach a stop notice.

In serious cases, court injunctions can be sought and failure to comply can mean prison.



RIDES: The incident has put safety for children under the microscope.

Theme park fined after toddler left with head injuries after fall

A major investigation into how a four-year-old girl could fall through a broken fence and be left with a cracked skull and bleeding on the brain, has resulted in Chessington World of Adventures being fined

ONE of the nation's top theme parks has been hit with a heavy fine after a young girl suffered severe head injuries after falling 14ft as she queued to get on one of its most popular rides.

Chessington World of Adventures was told it must pay £150,000 after the four-year-old girl from Kent fell as she queued for the Tomb Blaster ride at the park in June 2012.

The child, who cannot be named for legal reasons, received a fractured skull and bleeding on the brain after the fall. She also suffered broken ribs. It left her in hospital for a month after the event.

The park said it "deeply regrets" the incident but insists its safety standards are among the very best.

Now the family of the injured girl – who may never fully recover from the extensive injuries she received – is calling on all attractions to toughen up their safety precautions to prevent any repeat.

The company which operates the popular site, which borders the London Borough of Kingston upon Thames and Surrey, pleaded guilty after being prosecuted by the Health and Safety Executive.

The victim's family say they are relieved that the park's owners have accepted responsibility for the incident and say they hope all public attractions will take steps to improve safety for young children.

Chessington World of Adventures Operations Ltd pleaded guilty over safety breaches after the girl fell through a wooden queuing platform due to a missing panel. The company was fined £150,000 plus costs of

some £21,614 after pleading guilty to breaching the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

A hearing at Guildford Crown Court heard the HSE had identified that a rotting paling in the fence had fallen out on the morning of the incident, having been dislodged, and that the whole fence showed evidence of serious weakening.

Claire Howard, a specialist serious injury lawyer at Irwin Mitchell's Southampton office representing the girl's family, said: "The family was naturally devastated after the accident and feared the worst.

"She suffered serious head injuries and needs specialist support and rehabilitation to help her to overcome the trauma.

"It is unknown what her long term prognosis will be but the rehabilitation package that we have implemented gives her parents peace of mind that she is making the best possible recovery and is enabling them to get their lives back on track.

"Although the HSE prosecution is now over, the civil claim continues.

"She still has years of difficulty ahead of her because of her injuries and the likelihood is that she may have to live with the consequences of this incident forever."

The girl's parents, from Sheppey, issued a joint statement after the hearing saying: "The past few years have been very tough for all the family but she has got stronger and stronger which has kept us going.

"We wanted to know exactly how this incident was able to happen and how she could fall so far while queuing for a children's ride.

"One minute we were enjoying a fun day out and the next she is fighting for her life. We are grateful that the HSE carried out a thorough investigation and we are relieved that the criminal trial is now over and the park's owners have accepted responsibility for the accident.

"This should never have happened and we hope that both Chessington World of Adventures and other public attractions learn from this to improve safety in future."

After the sentencing, investigating HSE inspector Karen Morris said: "This was a disastrous and horrifying incident for the child and her parents. They had travelled from their home in Kent for a fun day out together at this well-known attraction only to find themselves hours later in an intensive care ward with their daughter.

"Quite simply, Chessington had insufficient measures in place to prevent or control the risk of falling from the raised walkway in the first place – and this was not just a couple of feet from the ground but nearly four metres.

"This incident shows the importance of implementing robust systems for checking and maintaining all aspects of rides, and this includes the walkways and fencing associated with queuing and where people gather."

A statement from the park said: "Chessington World of Adventures regards the health and safety of its guests and employees as its number one priority.

"The resort has an excellent safety record with no previous convictions or enforcement notices against it, and every year invests significant resources in maintenance and safety measures.

"What happened to the young child was an isolated incident which we deeply regret, and from the outset we have put in place a package of support for the child and the family which will continue for as long as is required.

"We also co-operated fully with the HSE investigation.

"This showed both a rigorous inspection and maintenance regime, and evidence not only of very swift action by staff, but also that the paling was dislodged by the application of exceptional force upon it shortly before the accident.

"Nevertheless, following the incident in 2012, we worked with the HSE to act on all their comments, including putting some additional measures in place such as the installation of a new metal safety fencing along the queue line."

SCENE OF THE FALL: A RECIPE FOR DISASTER

THE accident occurred while the victim and her family were queuing for the Tomb Blaster ride at the theme park in June 2012.

During the hearing at Guildford Crown Court, it was revealed that, after its investigation, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) had identified that a rotting paling [a wooden post] in the fence (pictured) had fallen out on the morning of the incident, having been dislodged, and that the whole fence showed evidence of serious weakening.

Explained the HSE: "However,

Chessington did not have either an adequate system of checking and inspecting the fencing or a maintenance process to ensure faults were identified and rectified."

The investigation revealed the fence palings, which were examined in detail, were found to have evidence of rot.

HSE told the court that an adequate maintenance regime and reporting system would have captured details of regular repairs and identified problems and trends.





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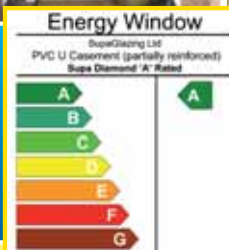
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A&Es in crisis: 'We came close to not having enough beds'

As more than 20 emergency departments put themselves on 'major incident' footing earlier this month, sparking a national outcry, Kent avoided such a step. **Sarah Linney** speaks to our hospitals to find out why we fared better.

CAREFUL planning, help from other parts of the health service and staff who brought new meaning to the word dedication have helped Kent's hospitals get through the winter A&E crisis.

Just.
Jane Ely, interim director of operations at East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust, says that although its three hospitals (the William Harvey in Ashford, the QEOM in Margate and the Kent and Canterbury) managed to cope, there were moments when the trust was not far off waving the distress flag.

"We had times when we had too many people in A&E and we were concerned," she said.

"We came close to not having enough beds for the patients who needed them, and where people were in a bed but were kept waiting too long to be on a ward.

"It feels relentless some-

times as it is one day after the next. You want to protect your staff and make sure they get the rest they need."

Had things got much worse, the trust would have had to ask for help, she said.

Across the country earlier this month the alarm was raised as hospitals hit breaking point and declared 'major incident' status.

In what seemed to be a flood of cases, more than 20 found themselves swamped.

Possible measures would have included seeing if any other hospitals were able to spare staff to help, or take care of extra patients temporarily.

Of particular concern was just what was causing the increase. With the winter weather mild, there appeared to be no clear indicator as to why emergency departments were struggling.

The analysis of just what happened continues but would appear to be a blend of too many people going to A&E rather than a GP or mi-

nor injury unit, so called 'bed blockers' who are well enough to go home but don't have the relevant care in place to be released, and funding pressures.

Kent, however, avoided following many in taking such a step.

"Quite often in those situations people will say we have a member of staff who can help you," Miss Ely explained.

Mercifully, however, this didn't have to happen - although a number of operations had to be cancelled, including 11 in one day at the QEOM.

"We reviewed all patients on a daily basis and we didn't cancel any urgent operations or cancer patients," Miss Ely added.

"But we cancelled some non-urgent surgery, for which we are very sorry, as we do realise the impact that has, but we had to prioritise the beds for patients who needed them. We were able to manage most patients as day cases - they came in



PRESSURE: Medway Maritime in Gillingham has seen figures to A&E soar

KEA

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TEAM: Many hospitals only managed to keep admitting patients due to dedication of staff

early and went home late."

Morag Jackson, chief operating officer of Medway Foundation Trust, which runs Medway Maritime Hospital, agreed. "There were huge pressures across the whole system," she said.

"Our entire focus over the period of time was on how we managed the acute patients, made sure they were safe, moved them onto the wards and discharged them.

"We made sure that the executives were in, which doesn't necessarily help look after patients, but we made sure they were doing all the liaison – phonecalls to other health bodies – so our clinical staff could look after patients and their families."

Medway also cancelled all non-urgent operations last week and the week before, and was due to review the situation on Friday (as KoS went to press). Operations on patients with cancer or life-threatening conditions were not affected.

"We had to make sure we were completely focused on

being able to move patients through the emergency department," Mrs Jackson said.

But it was the staff, Miss Ely said, who really got the trust through.

"All our staff went way beyond what we expected," she said.

"We had a lot of people cancel leave and come in, or people volunteering to stay later. The executive director, the medical director and the chief nurse were all in at weekends working.

"We had doctors who were still there at 2am when normally they would be finishing in the early evening.

"It was an amazing response and I am really proud."

Mrs Jackson in Medway agreed. "Our staff were great, both on the front line and everywhere else," she said.

"But we don't want everyone working lots of additional hours and ending up burned out themselves."

Miss Ely said that good preparation – and learning from the past – had also helped.

"We planned well ahead as much as we could and monitored the situation daily," she said.

"We alerted people if we were under pressure, and SECAMB [the ambulance service] put a member of their team into all our major departments.

"They have different information from us, they can tell us how many ambulances we should expect that day, if they are seeing a higher than expected demand, and they can see if a 999 call comes in. We record people as soon as they arrive, but they can tell us who is going to arrive and we can plan for the next couple of hours.

"We have GPs in A&E too, and SECAMB will assess a patient so sometimes those patients can be directed to them."

The health service also ran extensive media campaigns letting people know about alternatives to A&E – such as minor injury units or pharmacies – and some surgeries were open seven-days-a-week.

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PRO-NHS PARTY POINT FINGER AT FUNDING

IT'S not the patients' fault for turning up at A&E unnecessarily – it's chronic underfunding which has led to the system becoming overstretched, Kent's National Health Action Party candidate says.

Paul Hobday, who is standing for the pro-NHS party in Maidstone and the Weald against Conservative Helen Grant, said: "This is our NHS brought to its knees by this government's programme of underfunding, cuts, closures and chaotic management.

"We need to stop blaming patients for turning up at A&E unnecessarily. If you look closely at the figures, the

number of people attending A&E in December was actually lower than in the summer. In the weeks ending December 21 and 28, there were 289,530 and 262,879 people attending major A&E departments, compared with 298,955 in the week ending June 22 and 298,711 in the week ending July 20.

"The real issue is the lack of capacity of hospitals to admit and care for patients, causing pressure in A&E. The UK has the second lowest number of hospital beds per capita in Europe. And the government's programme of downgrading and closing A&Es and urgent care centres is fuelling the A&E logjam."

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Week ending January 18, 2015 **15**

"The sense we get is that the message has made people think twice before coming to A&E," Miss Ely said.

"According to a report we have had, younger people are using it as their first port of call as large numbers of them are still not registered with their GP. Or sometimes we have people saying they have come for a second opinion."

"The issue is minor injuries that could be seen elsewhere, and the number of people coming to A&E with those has reduced."

"But as a population we have forgotten basic first aid, and we still see a proportion of people who didn't need to come to us and should have gone to a minor injuries unit."

Mrs Jackson added: "The message went out to GPs asking them to see patients in their home or in the surgery."

"And we work very closely with community and social care to make sure that if patients could go to a more appropriate place, or go home, then that's what happened."

"We saw up to a 30 per cent increase in the number of patients compared with last year, and we are seeing an increase in the number of patients coming to A&E anyway as the population is ageing."

"We have a nurse who assesses all the patients when they come in, to see if they need acute care or to see the GP on site, and normally about 25 per cent of patients who present at A&E go to the GP, but over the last few weeks this reached 30 per cent. Sometimes that's to do with the availability of appointments, or sometimes people want to see a doctor immediately."

However, Miss Ely stressed that



STEPS: Some minor operations at the QEQM in Margate were cancelled

most of the patients who had come to A&E genuinely did need to be there – and that people who were concerned, or who had symptoms such as chest pains or breathing problems, should call 999 or 111.

"We have seen some quite ill patients this year – and more patients over 75," she added.

"It's not all about drunk people, or people using A&E rather than going to their GP. There have been small amounts of that, but we have seen high numbers of sick people."

"The needs of patients have also increased compared with last year. There were more people who needed support to get out of hospital again. The need for care homes and residential homes has been unprecedented and we are going to look into that as a team in more detail, as sometimes that delayed those people going home."

"Quite a few of our patients have long-standing conditions. A chest infection on top of diabetes can make it quite complex and it

DON'T MAKE A&E YOUR FIRST CALL

KENT's eight clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) – the bodies responsible for organising healthcare in the county and comprising local GPs – ran a campaign in the media from October onwards to raise awareness of alternatives to A&E for out-of-hours care.

The CCGs also worked together to develop an award-winning app, called Health Help Now, to help people work out where they need to go for care.

The app lists common symptoms and suggests the best

place for treatment, with directions to the nearest services and opening times. It includes advice for all age groups, including babies, children, teenagers, adults and the elderly.

The campaign also reminded people who need medical help fast but are not a 999 emergency to dial the NHS for free on 111.

Other things people can do include taking exercise, stocking their medicine cabinet, not drinking too much and asking their GP to call them back if they can't get to their surgery.



needs to be managed carefully."

Medway was, in fact, the second worst A&E in England according to figures released last week, and the hospital has now been in special measures for 18 months, but Mrs Jackson, who was appointed in November, says the new board are determined to sort out its problems.

"We have a new chairman, chief nurse, financial director and operating officer and we are advertising for a chief executive," she said.

"There is an 18-month plan and we

are committed to turning this round."

"Some of the issues are not A&E's fault. It's because we haven't got enough beds, and that is often because we are not able to discharge patients quickly enough to their own home or to community healthcare."

"We need to make sure that if there's a way of getting them safely back to their own home, we discharge them quicker than we are managing at the moment. This requires real joined-up working between us and community services."

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Ex-anorexic: I can't bear hearing of friends' new year diets

For the majority of us, seeking out a calorie-busting regime in the new year is an annual process. But for those who have suffered the hell of an eating disorder, this time of year brings with it a whole host of challenges to overcome.

By Sarah Linney

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WHEN it comes to January there are three things that you can be sure of.

The weather will be glum, the shops will have sales and everyone is on a diet.

The detoxes, denial and carb-cutting of the new year follow the mince pies and mulled wine of Christmas as surely as night follows day. At best, it's all a bit irritating for those who don't buy into the national weight loss obsession.

At worst, if you're one of the 30,000 or so people in Kent who suffer from an eating disorder, it can worsen your condition and be a barrier to your recovery.

Dance teacher Gemma Phazey, from Canterbury, is in recovery from anorexia, but says she still finds the post-Christmas period very hard.

"It's just horrible. I hate this time of year," Miss Phazey said.

"Some of my friends are on diets and I have to say to them: don't talk to me about them. I don't want to know if you have lost weight."

"There are so many adverts everywhere for weight loss programmes and weight loss tablets. I have to switch them off as I can't watch them. And it seems like it's everywhere now with social media."

Of course the vast majority of people will either shed the weight they want or simply give up. But others – almost always as a consequence of other issues in their lives – will go too far.

It is estimated around 10 per cent will become anorexic – a serious mental health condition, which will see sufferers dramatically limit their food intake in a bid to attain a low weight, make themselves vomit and exercise excessively.

Around 40 per cent will be bulimic, which tends to involve binge eating, then inducing vomiting or taking laxatives in a bid to get rid of the food.

The rest will fall into unspecified variations on the theme.

Across the UK, it is thought that around 1.6 million people have an eating disorder – nearly 90 per cent of whom will be women.

Miss Phazey's problems started when she was 11 or 12, when she started to compare herself to other girls in her dance class.

"I was looking at myself in a leotard and tights all day, and I thought that to be the best dancer I had to be super-skinny," she recalled.

"And I think I had that wiring in my head that meant I just kept going."

"I got really good at hiding from people what I was doing, but a couple of years later my mum cottoned on and threatened to stop me going to dance classes."

It seemed that parental shock tactics had worked but Miss Phazey says that in reality, the problem lay dormant for years, then resurfaced in the lead-up to her wedding at the age of 25.

"I thought I had gone back to eating properly, but I still wouldn't eat crisps and chocolate. I think it was underlying for a long time," she said.

"It was very slow and gradual. I cut things out, but I put it down to stress. My husband was away in the week so I would just eat an evening meal in the week and then eat normally when he was home, so he didn't think there was anything wrong."

"I went to the doctor on January 22, 2013. It was the Christmas that made me think, this isn't right. I dreaded Christmas, and I wasn't being myself because I was so stressed out. I actually went because I was having anxiety attacks, and it all came out."



MODERATION: If you're going to diet, do it in moderation to avoid failure or extreme and damaging behaviour

"The doctor was brilliant, and referred me to a nutritionist and a therapist."

Part of the reason eating disorders often flourish for years is that unrealistic ideals of thinness, and depriving ourselves of food in a bid to achieve them, have become more accepted in our society.

This makes it much easier for those who have crossed the, sometimes blurred, line into having an eating disorder to convince themselves that they don't have a problem, and harder for them to recover – because, after all, isn't it just normal to want to be very thin?

"Everybody else would be saying 'I have to diet and exercise', and I would think, I need to do that as well," Miss Phazey recalled.

"Even if I am just talking to friends, people will say things like, 'I've eaten too much, I'm going to cut out carbs'."

KEA

"I get really stressed about the amount of food that's available over Christmas, and now I have to keep saying to myself: it doesn't matter what everyone else does, don't listen to the people who are trying to lose weight. But I find it really difficult to ignore the voice telling me that I need to go on a diet."

Like most recovering sufferers, Miss Phazey is acutely aware of the futility of our collective weight loss mania.

"Before Christmas it's all about eating sweets and chocolate and everything else, and then when it's over, that's a bad thing," said the 28-year-old.

"The other thing that bothers me is when people say they are going on a detox. My doctor has always said that your body looks after itself."

"I used to naturally put a bit of weight on over Christmas, but as

soon as I got back to work, without even thinking about it I would just go back to my normal weight."

"The more you diet, the more you want things you can't have. The best way is everything in moderation."

Her advice for anyone struggling is to not allow yourself to be exposed to talk of diets.

"It took me a few years to be honest with my friends and say: you talking to me about diets doesn't help," Miss Phazey said.

"They hadn't realised that what they were saying was anything out of the ordinary."

Nigel Jacobs is a family therapist with the Kent and Medway Eating Disorders Service, run by the NHS.

He says the service sees an increase in people seeking help in January.

"Everyone is overindulging. If you are trying to restrict food it will make

Turn to Page 20

Of course, many people on a post-Christmas diet have absolutely no need to be.

He urges anyone who is finding they are struggling with food to see their doctor – and to seek help from those around them.



"A preoccupation with weight and shape is one of the key features of cur-

“Added to this is airbrushing and digital manipulation of images - used to create a hyper-real perfection where even the most natural of varia-

"But for someone who has a predisposition towards developing one, or has suffered from one in the past, this time of year is dangerous. The Christ-

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mas period and what follows on is definitely the most difficult time of the year for people suffering from eating disorders.

"People should be aware that many of the diets we are exhorted to follow have no longevity and weight lost is soon regained. A balanced diet and appropriate exercise is the only successful long-term answer for those who genuinely need to lose weight."

Melissa Wolfe, 34, developed an eating disorder after going on a diet - but agrees that most dieters don't go on to do the same.

"My eating disorder started with Lent, when I decided to cut out chocolate and sugar, and ended up in the throes of a serious illness," she recalled.

"I have no doubt that this was quite unusual and that there were inevitably other factors which ended up rocketing me into an eating disorder but, since then, I have been very sceptical about labelling foods good and bad and banning things absolutely.

"I think that lots of food companies jump on the fact that people tend to eat a bit more over Christmas to reinforce the guilt messaging that drives people towards being healthier. It seems ridiculous that December is filled with ads for chocolate and rich food and January with ads for Actimel and Dietchef, when they are only separated by a day - that last week it was fine to eat this food, but this week it's not."

Miss Wolfe - who has been completely recovered from her eating disorder for five years - says a fresh start is all very well, but that being kind to yourself is important too.

"I think everyone likes the idea of an opportunity to change something

about themselves or make themselves better, but it is sad that this has now become associated, for many people, with appearance and size," she said.

"I think it's really important to know that at any point in your life, you can make a conscious decision to change, but I also think it's important to be tolerant of and loving towards yourself.

"January is a pretty cold, dark, rubbish month overall and making it harder for yourself by creating a lot of crazy rules or depriving yourself of things seems like a bad idea."

She said that when she was ill, Christmas, not January, was the worst time.

"I think I found Christmas so incredibly difficult that I was just relieved by the time January came. But January gives the restrictive voice a lot more ammunition than it normally has and can make it harder to grow the healthier voice," Miss Wolfe said.

"I think people who are conscious of food and weight and their appearance are more vulnerable than other people to January detox messaging. It is likely to play into fears and worries about themselves that they already hold and reinforce these.

"These days, I have somehow managed to switch off my head to those messages, and the older I have got the less it bothers me. I increasingly feel that I move in a society that doesn't care about it at all.

"It's about keeping it in perspective. It's a bit of a marketing ploy, and most people are not really going to go through with it. And it's about thinking about what you want your year to be like, and if you want it to be controlled by food or if you want it to be something else."

PRESSURE: Is society to blame for rise in eating disorders?



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Make sure new voting registration system doesn't leave you voiceless

The biggest change ever to the way we register to vote came into force last year, but some are still not aware of how the updated scheme could affect them ahead of this May's exciting general election...

By Maria Chiorando

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THIS May will see one of the most hotly-contested general elections in living memory – but unless you are registered to vote, you will have no say in the outcome.

The county will also have local elections in Medway, and on top of that, as Mark Reckless's defection to Ukip last year showed, a by-election could rear its head at any moment, so the importance of being on the electoral register is at an all-time high.

But what many people don't know, is that the biggest change to the electoral registration system in nearly 100 years was introduced last summer, with a new system, called individual electoral registration (IER), put in place.

This replaced the old Victorian system, where the 'head of household' registered everyone living in their property. This means that now, each individual is responsible for registering themselves.

Under IER, those already registered to vote will have their details on the existing electoral register checked against their details on the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) database.

Where there is a match, they will be 'confirmed' and automatically transferred to the new register.

Where more information is required, people will need to re-register, which, for the first time, people can now do online.

The new system will also see some changes for those choosing to vote by post (see box).

According to a spokesman from the Electoral Commission, which is an independent elections watchdog and regulator of party and election finance: "The move to IER and a more modern, secure and streamlined registration system is an important step forward."

"In particular, the fact that since June 2014 people have been able for the first time to register online will, we hope, make the system more accessible to many of those that are not currently registered."

WHO IS LESS LIKELY TO BE REGISTERED TO VOTE?

THERE are certain groups of people who are less likely to be registered to vote, according to research by the Electoral Commission. They include:

- People under 35, as younger people, who are more likely to move from one address to another, are less likely to be registered.
- People who rent from a private

landlord, as they are more likely to change their address - they are also less likely to be registered than those who own their own home.

- Voters of white ethnicities are more likely to be registered than those claiming some black, mixed or other ethnicity.
- Citizens of the European

Union and Commonwealth are under-registered.

- Those classified as social grade DE are less likely to be registered than other social grades. (This grade includes semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations, unemployed people and those with the lowest grade occupations).

"Registering to vote is now as straightforward to do online as many other everyday transactions that people have come to expect. This may be particularly useful for people who are currently less likely to be registered."

The new individual registration system is more modern and democratic, according to Tunbridge Wells MP, Greg Clark.

He said: "It is only right that in a country which has such a long and proud history of democratic participation, we ensure that we have an electoral registration system

fit for the 21st century. These changes ensure that individuals register securely and enable them to register in the simplest possible way."

IER is also considered to be much more secure than the old household registration system as anyone applying to be on the electoral register will now also need to provide their date of birth and National Insurance number.

Local authorities all have electoral registration officers (ERO) who are legally responsible for maintaining the electoral register for their area, which means they are key in getting the mes-

sage about the new system across.

In order to do this, EROs started writing to residents last year, letting them know whether they need to re-register themselves.

They will also have started using a number of different methods to contact people directly that have not responded to letters.

These include follow-up letters and knocking on doors.

Ashford Borough Council's ERO John Bunnett, said: "Last year's change was an important one and it's essential that people remember that

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HAVING YOUR SAY: Do you need to re-register?

they are now responsible for their own registration.

"You must be on the electoral roll in order to cast your vote in the May elections.

"Please don't leave it until it's too late, make sure you are registered now, especially if you have moved house recently."

Under the new system, around 80 per cent of those already on the electoral register will be automatically added after their name and address is matched against existing government records.

However, some people need to ac-

tively transfer to the new system, so anyone who thinks they might not be registered, or their details may not be up to date as they have moved recently, can take advantage of the new online registration service.

Those people who are not successfully matched may need to provide additional information in order to complete the process – the easiest way to do this is online, at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote.

Some local authorities do provide a telephone registration service, you should contact your local registration office to find out if yours does.

HOW WILL 'IER' AFFECT POSTAL VOTERS?

TO improve security, there are some changes to postal voting that will come into effect earlier than for other forms of voting.

So those who choose to use a postal vote should be aware of how they could be affected by the changes. These changes will happen in the following way:

■ Those who already use postal voting, and who are matched and automatically

transferred to the new register will be able to continue to vote by post under IER.

■ Those who already use postal voting but are not matched, and so are not automatically transferred to the new register, will need to register individually to remain a postal voter. These voters will receive letters from their EROs explaining what they will need to do.

■ Anyone who is not registered individually by 12 working days before the UK Parliamentary General Election will not be able to vote by post.

However existing electors will still be able to vote in person at a polling station. That's because no one will be removed from the existing registers as a result of the switch to IER until after the general election.

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Ferry firm 'will be sold' as tribunal appeal is rejected

MyFerryLink may be on borrowed time after owner Eurotunnel confirmed it will be sold after competition ruling

THE saga of cross-Channel ferry operator MyFerryLink continues into 2015 – despite confirmation from owner Eurotunnel that the business is up for sale.

It follows a decision made as Kent on Sunday went to press last Friday which dismissed an appeal against a ruling by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA).

It had originally said that Eurotunnel's acquisition of the defunct SeaFrance vessels, which it re-branded MyFerryLink, saw the firm acquire 60 per cent of the cross-Channel market.

As a consequence, critics said, it meant Eurotunnel could undercut rivals on the ferry service while capitalising on its tunnel link. In short, that it was anti-competitive.

Both P&O and DFDS, which both operate the route, welcomed the latest decision. They both insisted that with Eurotunnel subsidising MyFerryLink, it was unfair and threatened to force them out of business on the

popular cross-Channel route.

Jacques Gounon, however, the chairman and chief executive officer of Groupe Eurotunnel, was left exasperated.

He said: "MyFerryLink is an operating and commercial success. We are proud to have succeeded where so many others have failed. Given the position of the British authorities, the future of MyFerryLink will now be determined outside the group."

A statement from Groupe Eurotunnel added: "In view of the requirement to cease operations within six months, which has been confirmed, and to realise the value of the work achieved, Groupe Eurotunnel will now seek a buyer for MyFerryLink."

It had been told last year it must cease operations, but continued while an appeal was lodged. But the decision by the Competition Appeal Tribunal would appear to be the final nail in its coffin.

However, MyFerryLink is actually operated by French workers co-oper-



SINKING: Firm sails on - but for how much longer?

ative SCOP. Following the latest ruling it says it will now look to lodge a further appeal.

A statement from MyFerryLink said: "Although the tribunal accepted a number of arguments made by the SCOP, the appeal has been dismissed. Given this, the SCOP intends to renew its appeal before the Court of Appeal over the coming days."

Chances are, however, it will be a time-buying mechanism for the firm.

However, in the meantime, Eurotunnel insists MyFerryLink will continue to operate a normal service while the search for a buyer gets under way.

The ruling states it cannot operate between Dover to Calais - which may leave an opportunity for it service other routes.

See www.kentnews.co.uk for the latest news.

AIRPORT PLANS

LYDD Airport chiefs have started seeking a contractor to extend its runway.

The airport has been working with Capita, part of the design team for London's £14.8 billion Crossrail transport scheme, in preparing and designing the 294-metre runway extension, plus a 150-metre starter extension.

The detailed tender documents have now been completed and issued to a number of contractors with an invitation to submit offers.

The winner will be named by the summer with work beginning by the end of the year.

The airport has been busy fulfilling the planning conditions attached to its consent for a runway extension and a new terminal which was granted in 2013.

Chief executive officer Charles Buchanan said: "Issuing the tenders is a major step forward for our project that will see the runway extended and ultimately a new terminal built."

"This will give a significant boost to our ambitions, increasing the airport's operational capabilities and attracting more aviation-related businesses."

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Train chief on challenge of London Bridge chaos

Sarah Linney speaks to Southeastern boss David Statham as commuters see terminal close for up to 18 months

THE phrase 'long-suffering' is often used when it comes to describing the county's commuters. And this week saw them perhaps facing their toughest long-term test yet.

A multi-billion-pound redevelopment of the busy London Bridge terminal has been under way for more than a year – but this month it got serious.

The redevelopment of the station means no Charing Cross trains will stop there between now and August next year, 2016, while platforms four, five and six are upgraded. These are the platforms used by Kent services.

And so far, it seems, it has passed off without major problems – although commuter groups say that is more down to luck than judgement.

They warned that if the snow should fall or signals fail, the fragile house of cards built up around the rebuild could tumble down around commuters' ears.



Commuters now have to get a train to Cannon Street if they want to get off at London Bridge – or, if they prefer, get off somewhere else in London and get the Underground.

Speaking to KoS this week, managing director David Statham (pictured above) said Southeastern had done its best to get customers ready for the changes.

"We have had about a year to prepare for this. We printed about a million leaflets and sent out about 100,000 letters, and we have taken on about 170 temporary staff," he explained.

"The focus for us has been to get information across about what's happening, and help people replan their

way around the redevelopment works.

"This is the biggest timetable change in five years, and it's early days. During peak time on Monday morning, 92.1 per cent of the trains ran on time – across the network at the moment the average is 88 or 89 per cent – and there was some feedback from passengers on Twitter, but we had no particular reports of overcrowding.

"I want to say thank you to people for bearing with us."

Trains to Cannon Street have been given extra carriages to cope with the increase in passengers and there are also extra trains to Blackfriars, about ten minutes' walk from Cannon Street.

"Our advice is to try if you can to get on a Cannon Street train," Mr Statham said.

"But if you end up on a Charing Cross train, for the next 20 months

you can use the Underground or the buses for free on specified routes to get back to London Bridge."

However, Andrew Stott, secretary of the Sevenoaks Rail Travellers' Association, painted a less rosy picture.

"My overall impression of Monday is that Southeastern were lucky," he said.

"The engineering works had overrun slightly and they cancelled a few early trains, but they managed to get services going.

"Trains to Cannon Street were pretty crowded and a number of passengers reported on Twitter that they couldn't get on some trains. But in the end everyone got there.

"In the evening, Cannon Street was



FUTURE: How the terminal will look once completed

extremely crowded, and there were delays at London Bridge, where they had crowd control measures as they were trying to get people who would normally be on three platforms onto one.

"It's going to be like that every day for the next three years. And if there's a points failure, or a signal failure, which happens about once a week, or if there's snow or something else, what would normally be a very difficult situation could get chaotic because the system is too stretched."

He said he did not feel adequate alternatives had been provided for passengers whose journeys had been disrupted.

"The alternatives are limited and rather miserly," Mr Stott said.

"You can use the Tube in very limited circumstances. You can't take a train to Victoria and then use the Tube; you can't go to Waterloo East and take the Waterloo and City Line to Bank; and on the routes you can use, you can't get off at intermediate stations."

With a thousand trains a day – almost one a minute – going through London Bridge, and platforms five and six among the busiest in Europe, Southeastern says that the revamp is badly needed. Jams and delays are frequent as trains cut across each other's paths and block each other's way.

The redevelopment – one of the biggest railway construction projects since the Second World War – will create a new concourse the size of Wembley Stadium and will allow the station to handle 50 per cent more passengers.

"It will be a much better station. There will be escalators to all plat-

forms and one concourse uniting all platforms, rather than the two or three on the station at the moment," Mr Statham said.

"And the track layout will change so there will be fewer times when a train has to wait for another one to pass in front of it."

There will also be 18 trains an hour into central London at peak times, making onward travel easier.

There will be trains to King's Cross, Blackfriars and Farringdon – which has services to Heathrow – and destinations like Cambridge, Peterborough, Gatwick airport and Brighton.

"Before there was a limited service, with one or two trains into London at peak times and about four an hour off-peak," Mr Statham said.

"This will make a huge difference to the transport system for London and the south east. For example, people will be able to get from Cambridge to Gatwick with no change."

All this, however, will be little comfort to harassed passengers who, in the short term, are seeing a diminished service for more money.

Season ticket holders have seen prices rise by an inflation-matching 2.5 per cent this year.

However, Mr Stott said he felt season ticket prices should also have remained the same.

"Our trains to London Bridge have been reduced by 40 per cent, and we think they haven't really been innovative enough about finding ways to make alternative journeys and putting on more capacity," he said.

"We pressed for a freeze on season tickets, but we have been asked to pay

more for a reduced service, which is fundamentally not fair."

And he said the problems were not only confined to the work at London Bridge.

"Fares keep going up, but trains are late – 83 per cent of trains are on time, and that's throughout the day – toilets don't work, the heating isn't on or sometimes it's on, on a hot day," Mr Stott said.

"People who travel on the high speed line from Ashford every day say it's overcrowded and people have to stand. The excuse they use for the Sevenoaks line is that it's a 19th-century railway, but the high speed line is supposed to be a 21st-century railway.

"When things go wrong, they don't tell us what's happening. And although you can get compensation if your train is delayed by 30 minutes or more, if it runs on time but you can't physically get on it because it is so overcrowded, you can't claim.

"In Dunton Green the lights in the passenger shelter have been out of order since November 17, and we have made at least six complaints about it, but nothing has happened."

He said he felt services in London were getting more attention than services in the provinces.

"In the London area, the Mayor has taken over rail services, prices have gone up less and they have got new trains which run on time and are cleaner," he added.

"We are seeing more and more divergence between the London system, where fares are subsidised because it is good for London, and fares out of Kent. But the economy



MORE ONLINE...

YOU can find out more about the changes to London Bridge and what it will mean to your journey by seeing our website.

This week we posted an essential guide to the work going on at the terminal, what it's for and exactly what it will mean for travellers.

You can find it, along with all the latest news and views from around the county at www.kentnews.co.uk.

Or to access the London Bridge page direct, simply go to: <http://bit.ly/1G0GL00>



MODERN: Artist's impression of how the inside of new terminal will eventually look

depends on good commuter services.

"Since privatisation, the government subsidy to the railways has increased from £1 billion [about £1.8 billion in today's money] to £5.2 billion."

However, Mr Statham said he was aware of the problems and that Southeastern planned to invest this year in improving services.

"About a million journeys this year will be taken by people whose tickets haven't had the price put up, and we are also offering discounts on the high speed line," he said.

"The increase is the lowest for five years, and will enable us to invest money in improving our service and the government to invest money in the rail infrastructure. Although it would be theoretically possible to raise prices by less than that, all the financial assumptions we have made involve investing £70 million in the things customers tell us are most important to them; a cleaner, more pleasant environment, a more reliable service, and better information when things go wrong.

"We do want people to feel they are getting better value for money – it is a big issue for season ticket holders. But this massive investment is going to make a huge change and hopefully people will see a real difference in the coming years."

He said Network Rail had also invested tens of millions of pounds trying to combat problems that had beset the railways last year.

"They have invested £19m across our network in improving earthworks and embankments, and there has been a lot of investment in making networks more resilient in cold weather."

■ **What has your experience of the service been since London Bridge's closure? Share your opinion and join the debate. Write to: The Editor, KoS, Kent House, 81 Station Road, Ashford, TN23 1PP. Or email editorial@kosmedia.co.uk.**

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Famous name with Victoria Cross and an Olympic gold

The Neame name carries a lot of weight in Kent given the brewery which the family has run. But Sir Philip Neame opted instead for a military career which would see him live a celebrated life. **Molly Kersey** looks at a remarkable man

BEING the only man in history to hold both a Victoria Cross and an Olympic Gold medal, you could be forgiven for a hint of egotism. But many of those who met Lieutenant General Sir Philip Neame VC were stunned by his modesty and lack of self-importance.

And this from the nephew of the founding father of one of Kent's most famous, and celebrated, businesses - the Faversham-based brewer Shepherd Neame.

His life was a remarkable one - after his heroics in both world wars he would also be knighted - as well as holding a string of senior positions, including Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Kent.

So just who was the man behind the legend?

Born in Selling, near Faversham, in 1888, Sir Philip was awarded the Victoria Cross for his heroic actions while serving as a lieutenant with the 15th field company, Royal Engineers, 8th division in France.

The official citation for the VC reads: "For conspicuous bravery on the 19th December [1914], near Neuve Chapelle, when, notwithstanding the very heavy rifle fire and bomb-throwing by the enemy, he succeeded in holding them back and

rescuing all the wounded men whom it was possible to move."

He was just 26-years-old at the time.

He had been a professional soldier before hostilities broke out, having graduated from the Royal Military Academy in Woolwich in 1908.

His son, Nigel Neame, told KoS: "He was in a sapper unit in the First World War, in the Royal Engineers, and he had been sent forward initially to build some wire entanglements, but having gone forward the infantry who he was supporting had launched a counter attack but were being counter attacked themselves by the Germans.

"They had a lot of wounded personnel already and they were pinned down by machine gun fire.

"My father went forward and immediately asked for some hand grenades, or 'jam tin bombs', and he was told they were not usable because the fuse had gotten wet.

"He was actually responsible for making a lot of these things, so he knew how to work out how these bombs could be fused or ignited even when they were damp.

"He had his penknife with him and trimmed all the fuses down and using a match box he was able to ignite the fuses and get the grenades working.

"With that he got all the infantry to get all the grenades they could, and single-handedly held the Germans back.

"He was moving along the trench, popping up in different places all the time, hurling these jam tin bombs to keep the Germans at bay while they got a lot of the men who had been wounded out."

Sir Philip held the trench for some 45 minutes while those who were wounded were evacuated.

It is a fascinating tale of bravery.

Sir Philip's Victoria Cross and the penknife he used on December 19 are now both proudly displayed in the Imperial War Museum after the family made the decision to donate them, knowing they would be perpetually safe and protected.

And yet Sir Philip's humility never wavered.

His son, Nigel Neame explained: "He always reminded us that what he did was going on across the whole of the Western Front, day in day out. He didn't really think that his action had been exceptional, but his action had been noticed.

"I think he was very modest, very self-effacing. There was no ego to him whatsoever. I think that was recognised by all sorts of people who worked with him.

"He had a charmed life I think. The average life span of a sapper going to the front in the First World War was about two weeks, but he managed to get through the conflict.

"He survived, but he recognised that a lot of others didn't. I think that because of the horrors of the war and what he had witnessed, he kept very much to himself."

Sir Philip was married to Berta, and together they had three sons - David, twins Nigel and Philip, and a daughter, Veronica.

Mr Neame explained: "I can remember him watching a television programme, 10 years before he died, about the First World War, and we were sitting there with him. He got up after that programme was over and just quietly said to us - 'I am not sure I should really have watched that'.

"He didn't speak a great deal about his time in the war. He did tell us about the Victoria Cross because as we got older we knew he had won one and it was special. He tended to make light of it.

"I think really that's the side of it we



FAME: Philip and Berta with a young Queen and Prince Philip, and, far right, with Carry On legend Sid James at the filming of *Crest of the Wave* in 1959

heard, but he didn't really discuss a great deal of the rest of the action that he was involved in during the conflict. I don't think many people did."

After peace was declared, Philip Neame, a keen sportsman, then set himself a new target.

He was part of the Great Britain team which travelled, in 1924, to Paris. He was part of the shooting team in what was known as the 'running deer' competition. Very much an event of its time, it was a contest involving four teams firing single shots at a moving target which simulated the animal.

He achieved his goal and collected an Olympic gold medal. In doing so he created a bit of history which has never been emulated since. He is, and remains, the only holder of the VC to also have won an Olympic gold.

Remaining in the British Army, his impressive career in the military saw him continue to rise up through the ranks. During the Second World War he attained the rank of Lieutenant General, and commanded British forces in North Africa.

As tensions in Europe began to build, by 1938, Philip Neame had been promoted to Major General and returned from India as Commandant of the Royal Military Academy in Woolwich.

During the conflict he found himself sent to north Africa and parts of the Middle East, where he would serve time on the frontline.

Eventually captured and held in an Italian prison camp, he helped dig a tunnel which saw a number of Allied troops escape the clutches of the enemy. Following the temporary overthrow of Mussolini in 1943, he was released and faced a hazardous journey to reach Allied lines.

During his time in captivity, he had begun writing a manuscript of his memoirs which he took with him.

After having to make a quick escape from a monastery in which he had been hiding, he left his beloved manuscript with the chief abbot there.

"Six months later," he son Nigel explains, "he got a call from the Ameri-



SOLDIER: Philip Neame in 1915

can Embassy and, lo and behold, he got his manuscript of his autobiography back."

Mr Neame explained that the chief abbot had clearly recognised the importance of what had been left with him, and had given the work to American forces.

Sir Philip went on to serve as the Lieutenant Governor of Guernsey from 1945 to 1953, and was knighted.

"In a way, that was recognition of his past achievements and the importance of the role that he was taking on in Guernsey," explained Mr Neame.

It was while he was in Guernsey that he finished his memoirs - *Playing with Strife: The Autobiography of a Soldier*.

The title is part of a sonnet by Rudyard Kipling, and each chapter either begins or ends with a verse from the poet.

He finished the book with the poignant epilogue from Kipling's *The Children's Song* - "Teach us delight in simple things, and mirth that has no bitter springs, forgiveness free of evil done, and love to all men 'neath the sun."

"I think those were the values by which he lived his life," said his son.

Sir Philip retired back to his home town of Selling, where he died in 1978, aged 89.

He is buried at Selling Church.



FAMILY: Nigel, Veronica and Philip Neame. Credit: Jason Dodd



MEMORIAL TO A HERO

AT THE end of last year, hundreds of people packed Faversham town centre for the unveiling of a memorial stone honouring Sir Philip Neame.

It followed a national campaign, launched by the Government last year, to honour First World War VC recipients by laying commemorative stones in their birth places.

The stone was unveiled in front of Faversham's Guildhall in December.

The event began with a military parade by the Royal Engineers' band, accompanied by soldiers of the Royal Engineers, and there was a 45-minute service in front of the Guildhall.

The event was attended by mem-

bers of the Neame family including his daughter Veronica and twin sons Nigel and Philip.

The Lord Lieutenant of Kent Viscount Philip De L'Isle; Shepherd Neame brewery chief executive Jonathan Neame and MPs Sir Hugh Robertson and Julian Brazier also attended.

The stone was officially unveiled by Lieutenant General Sir Mark Mans, chief Royal Engineer.

He said: "He was a great man in so many ways and the Royal Engineers are delighted that the country has seen fit, in this centenary anniversary of his VC award, to recognise his achievements."

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CHANGES: Tesco has sparked fury in Kent town



‘Toxic’ Tesco told to quit town as it pulls plug on superstore plans

Following announcement earlier this month it was scrapping 49 new stores around the UK, council chiefs in Dartford have spent the week fuming over its decision to pull out of Lowfield Street proposal

By Chris Britcher

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A BITTER row has erupted after Tesco confirmed last week it was pulling out of plans to build a major superstore in Dartford.

The supermarket giant revealed it was pulling out of 49 proposed large stores across the UK and closing 43 underperforming outlets.

It was the latest move by the troubled firm as it looks to reaffirm its position as the nation's supermarket leader.

But, having been granted planning permission back in 2011 for the site in Lowfield Street, town chiefs were left furious over the decision to pull out altogether.

Jeremy Kite, leader of the Conservative-run Dartford Borough Council, told a senior Tesco executive its reputation in the town was now “toxic” after the announcement.

It followed earlier criticism from local Tory MP Gareth Johnson.

The development is a major blow to the town as the store would have completely transformed a street, which has been left in limbo as it waited for the supermarket firm to develop the site.

Dartford has already been dealt a huge blow to its once bustling town centre by the proximity of the Bluewater shopping complex.

Now Cllr Kite is insisting Tesco must relinquish Lowfield Street land to “developers with vision”.

In a telephone call with the company's group property director, Cllr Kite

urged the troubled supermarket to waste no time relinquishing its land-holdings in the town to those with a better desire and vision to deliver.

He said: “I told Tesco frankly that any ideas they might have to promise an alternative plan of their own for Lowfield Street would be likely to be met with derision and contempt by local people.

“Tesco is a damaged brand as far as Lowfield Street which they have left behind. Residents don't trust them, traders don't trust them and, quite honestly, none of my members [on the council] trust them.

“They own large plots of land in Lowfield Street which they have left little more than derelict wasteland. They could salvage what little reputation they still have in this community by agreeing to dispose of their holdings quickly.

“They have a current planning permission for housing at one end of the site, which they could develop but there are others with the interests of our community at heart who may be

better placed to move quickly. I want Tesco to do the right thing and go. Just go.”

Cllr Kite also criticised Britain's ‘woeful’ property laws which give councils no power to insist that Tesco sell the land but believes it makes good commercial sense for them to do so and is determined to turn pressure on the ailing food giant.

“Tesco will want to escape the financial burden of all these abandoned sites and that suits us. We want them to hand over quickly so that better people with better ideas can take over.

“As I said last year, Dartford may have had no powers to stop Tesco's deep pockets buying up land and no legal powers to force them to leave, but as the economy finally recovers the one thing Tesco cannot crush is the strength and determination of this town to recover from the harm done to it by a dithering supermarket.

“Dartford is a town with a long and great market-town tradition and its strength lies in that history. As it

shows real signs of emerging from a tough and damaging retail recession Dartford will not be beaten by an ailing supermarket.”

Following the announcement, Tesco CEO Dave Lewis said that Tesco was committed to working alongside the council to ensure a solution was found for the site.

He said: “I am very sorry that we have not been able to deliver the investment that we intended. I know that this news will be a real disappointment to many people in the local community and we're extremely grateful for the support we've received for our plans. I am very aware of the importance of the site to the area and I am determined that we will work closely with the council to find the right solution for the local community.”

MP Gareth Johnson said Tesco had treated the town in “an appalling manner”. He said: “Recent decisions from other companies have shown there is a keen interest from business-

es to invest in Dartford so we can be positive about the future.

“I personally will be glad to see the back of Tesco but the important thing now is to work on Dartford's future – a development in Lowfield Street without a Tesco store.

“We need to see something that works in the best interests of Dartford and I believe this is now very achievable.”

Added Cllr Kite: “The opportunity we have now, perhaps as we have never had before, is to use new channels to hear authentic Dartford voices and views as plans and visions are shaped.

“To that end, I have announced plans to boost the cross-party Lowfield Street Working Group with new members and new voices drawn from the local community.

“That group will meet within days to commence the widening of its membership.

“There is a great deal of anger at Tesco's appalling treatment of our town but... this town can be better without Tesco, and it will be.”

THE TROUBLES OF TESCO AMID A CHANGING MARKET

JUST a few short years ago it was the undisputed king of the British supermarket industry, with ambition to expand and take over the world.

But for its huffing and puffing, Tesco has now found itself struggling to adapt to a rapidly changing consumer market and a host of internal issues.

Over-estimating profit expectations has caused it no end of regulatory problems, and the

consumer shift to buying smaller amounts of shopping more frequently has seen its previous policy of building enormous superstores come unstuck.

Make no mistake, Tesco is still expected to deliver a group trading profit of in excess of £1 billion, but its new chief executive is now having to make some serious restructuring decisions.

And one of those, was to scrap some planned stores and any which

don't perform to expectations.

In addition to Dartford, it also confirmed plans to build a new store on the site of former Civic Centre in Albion Road, Bexleyheath, have been binned too.

That would have created some 370 full and part-time jobs.

Anger there was sparked too.

A council spokesman said: “We will be meeting with Tesco in the next few weeks to discuss the future of the site and we will be working

actively with them to ensure that plans come forward for the site which enable the town to continue to prosper.”

They are not alone in this process. Sainsbury's, for example, pulled out of proposals for major developments in Tonbridge and Canterbury – both rebuilding existing stores – which had a major negative impact on community facilities which would have been created as a spin-off.



Jackson Live tribute tour promises to be 'explosive'

Lifelong Michael Jackson fan Ben Bowman explains he relishes the challenge

THE world was left reeling several years ago, at the news of Michael Jackson's untimely death.

Many had bought tickets for his upcoming extravaganza at London's O2 Arena, eager to watch their idol in his final tour. Unfortunately, it was not to be.

Among the disappointed was Ben Bowman, super fan, and Michael Jackson tribute act - and now, having honed his act, he will bring his show - Jackson Live in Concert - to Margate's Winter Gardens next month.

Mr Bowman says: "I am very excited - it's been an amazingly busy year.

"The whole team - me, the band, dancers and creative team are looking forward to the Margate gig. We go across the whole range of Michael Jackson's back catalogue, from the Jackson five stuff to

all his solo material as well.

"This show is based on his three world tours, and it is also inspired by elements of the O2 tour that he never got to perform."

Michael Jackson is not only remembered as one of the most influential artists of all time, but many of today's artists have been inspired by his iconic style.

His career spanned nearly five decades of music, and he was continually at the forefront of popular music.

Surely following in his footsteps must be a daunting task?

Mr Bowman says: "The wonderful thing is that the sky is the limit - with dancing and singing, you never stop learning, you keep practising and keep getting better.

"Keep going, keep trying, keep improving.

"Because I love what I do, everything feeds into it, so I eat very healthily and keep fit.

"This feels easy, because I love what I do, so it's important to be in shape to do it well."

Being on stage is one of Mr Bowman's favourite elements of the job.

He says: "Being on stage is incredible. It's quite hard to explain the feeling.

"I step out of myself, and into the zone. It's intense, but I do it because I love it.

"I feel very lucky to be able to do something I enjoy so much - and I enjoy every element."

The process does not start and end on stage - much prep work is done designing the shows.

He says: "It's a very democratic process with the whole creative team. We will all sit down and

think about what we can do for the next show.

"We are always generating ideas, and everyone likes to contribute, so it's a very inclusive process.

"It's not just me - there's a full band behind me, as well as dancers and other people involved too.

"All of us are striving to get better and better all the time.

"I've been doing this for 10 years now, and feel that the shows have been evolving that whole time.

"I would tell anyone who is thinking about seeing the show that they should give it a go, because we all strive to create the most explosive concert out there."

Jackson Live in Concert comes to Margate Winter Gardens on February 6.

Visit www.jacksonliveinconcert.co.uk for more information or call 01843 292795.

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Comedy politico Mark Thomas at the Trinity

By Maria Chiorando

maria.chiorando@archant.co.uk

FOLLOWING a sell-out Edinburgh Fringe run, comedian Mark Thomas will continue his 8th nationwide tour – with a stop-off at Tunbridge Wells Trinity Theatre on February 14 with his show Cuckooed.

The comic, who was born in south London in 1963, is perhaps best-known for his one-man theatre piece, Bravo Figaro.

This piece, which was commissioned by the Royal Opera House, is about his opera-loving father.

The show sold out its run, won Mr Thomas a Herald Angel award, a Scotsman Fringe First, and was recently broadcast on Radio 4.

He went on to create his second theatre piece, Cuckooed, for which he won his second Scotsman Fringe First.

He was also awarded the Amnesty International Freedom of Expression award. This prize is given to an outstanding Fringe production carrying a human rights message.

He described winning the accolade as "a very inspiring



experience and I feel very humbled".

In Cuckooed, Mr Thomas tells the story of how Britain's biggest arms manufacturer, BAE Systems, came to spy on a comedian in this critically-acclaimed tale of hubris, planes, demos and undercover deceit.

On top of his live work, Mr Thomas is also known for his Channel 4 series The Mark Thomas Comedy Product, which ran for six series.

He has published several books,

including The People's Manifest and Walking Israel's Barrier for Fun. He says that 'deciding to walk in the middle of the Israeli barrier illegally accompanied by an over confident ex Israeli soldier' is the most dangerous thing he's ever done.

He has also been a regular contributor to political magazine The New Statesman.

Cuckooed comes to the Trinity Theatre on February 14. Visit www.trinitytheatre.net or call the box office on 01892 678 678.



MANY FACES: Mark Thomas



CONTROVERSIAL: Mr Thomas makes the political, personal

Comedy for the over 15s

SARA Pascoe, star of QI, Never Mind the Buzzcocks and Mock the Week, will be appearing at Folkestone Quarterhouse on January 24.

It is a strictly over 15s show. Visit, www.quarterhouse.co.uk.



The Producers in Bromley

TV PERSONALITY Louie Spence will join comedian Jason Manford in the UK tour of The Producers at The Churchill Theatre, Bromley, from March 6 to 14.

To book, call the box office on 0844 8717620 or visit, www.atgtickets.com for further information.

Folk rock pioneers tour

STEELEYE Span are touring with a new live show, coming to the Theatre Royal Margate on February 24.

For more information, call 01843 292795 or visit www.theatreroyalmargate.com.



Art imitating life on stage

THE Marlowe Studio's first show of the year will offer an insight into the soul of the literary genius Oscar Wilde.

Wilde Without The Boy will be at the Marlowe Studio, Canterbury, at 8pm on January 15.

To book, visit www.marlowetheatre.com.

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Margate sees rock action

SIMPLE Minds are embarking on a major multiple date UK tour in 2015, visiting Margate on April 24.

Call the box office on 01843 292795 or visit www.margatewintergardens.co.uk.



Jane rides into Dartford

CALAMITY Jane will visit The Orchard Theatre as part of its UK tour from January 27-31.

The musical stars Jodie Prenger - best known as the winner of BBC 1's I'd Do Anything.

The play includes an Oscar-nominated score. For more information, visit orchardtheatre.co.uk or call the Ticket Office on 01322 220000.

Marking Swan Lake visit

TO LAUNCH the tour of the Moscow City Ballet's Swan Lake, The Orchard Theatre, Dartford, is holding an evening of youth and community dance on January 19.

For details, visit orchardtheatre.co.uk.



Masters of improvisation

STAR of Have I Got News For You Paul Merton takes to the road with his Impro Chums.

They will be at The Marlowe Theatre, Canterbury, on May 5 and The Assembly Halls, Tunbridge Wells, on May 15.

Visit www.marlowetheatre.com or www.assemblyhalltheatre.co.uk

Jasper Carrott back on stage with some musical friends

By Maria Chiorando

maria.chiorando@archant.co.uk

OBE-winning comedian Jasper Carrott will be bringing his Stand Up And Rock tour to Folkestone on June 11.

An event spokesman said: "Jasper Carrott's Stand Up And Rock does exactly what it says on the tin.

"Jasper is back to his very best, mic in hand regaling the audience with his inimitable stand up routines before introducing his musical compatriots that have been 'rockin' audiences all over the world."

This new show intersperses Mr Carrott's stand-up comedy with musical performances from Bev Bevan - the drummer from the Move and ELO, among just some of Mr Carrott's other musical heroes.

Mr Carrott's career has now spanned five decades.

It all started when he became resident compere at the Boggery Folk Club in Birmingham in the mid-seventies.

There he discovered his talent for comedy, and his inability to sing.

His career highlights include An Audience with Jasper Carrott - his



CARROTT AND FRIENDS: The Stand Up and Rock cast

1978, tv show; The Unrecorded Jasper Carrott, which was a live-to-air one hour Saturday night comedy show, and the 1983 BAFTA-winning Carrott's Lib.

An event spokesman said: "A hugely popular stalwart of the British folk club scene, his comedy single Funky Moped shot to the top of the British pop charts in 1975, establishing him as a household name overnight.

"The flipside was his take on the legendary Magic Roundabout, a record still sought out today by a whole new generation of fans.

"Throughout his career he has been a mainstay or, as he became known, the Godfather of British Comedy.

"His numerous television shows and series kept him at the forefront of British television viewing and his concert tours have taken

him across the globe."

Stand Up & Rock comes to Folkestone's Leas Cliff Hall for one night on June 11.

Tickets are available from the venue box office, or you can call 0844 871 3015 (there is a booking fee). Tickets are also available to buy online.

Please visit www.atgtickets.com/venues/leas-cliff-hall for further information.

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To find out more call Lou or Fran on 01843 597115 or email tcspc@hotmail.co.uk

KEA

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Fusion food trend sparks stampede for riesling

The most famous of Germany's grapes is taking the spotlight once more, Sam Wylie-Harris claims...

EVERY grape has its moment and, mainly thanks to the surge in popularity of Asian cuisine, this time has come for riesling.

Germany's trophy grape comes in a variety of styles, and this noble white with its crisp, natural acidity, no oak influence and a lower-than-average alcohol level is light and elegant, but with the power to partner spicy curries, stir-fries and sushi and sashimi.

The flavours of apples, peaches and pear come in varying degrees of sweetness - from bone dry to richly sweet - and the distinctive slim bottle that's sometimes too tall to fit in the door of the fridge (a minor irritant) has also found favour in South Africa, Australia and New Zealand where it's grown in small quantities.

Just across the border from Germany, the picturesque Alsace region in north-east France also produces excellent riesling and the famous wine route (which celebrated its 60th anniversary last year) stretches along vine-covered hills on the west bank of the river Rhine.

The sunny, warm and dry climate provides ideal conditions for wine-making and dry, spicy styles such as Cave de Beblenheim Grafeneben Riesling 2010, Alsace, France which is a lovely example.

With typical aromas of spring flowers and a streak of minerality running through the lemony flavours, this would also pair well with firm white fish for non-spice lovers.

A sweeter counterpart and an off-



GRAPE EXPECTATIONS:
Riesling grapes in the vineyard

dry style from one of the region's most famous winemakers, Rolly Gasmann, Riesling 2009, Rolly Gasmann, Alsace, France is rich and lush but has enough acidity to stop it being over-the-top.

With succulent pear flavours and a hint of pepper, it has a gewurztraminer lychee nose, but without the oily mouthfeel and tastes utterly delicious.

Lucky for some, Germany has 13 wine regions and the second largest, Pfalz is marked by powerful, dry styles such as Darting Estate Dürkheimer Riesling 2013, Germany.

Fresh and lively with peach, apple and melon punctuated by a bracing note of minerality that gives way to orange groves, it is both exotic and

appealing. For newcomers to riesling who prefer to venture Down Under for their vino, Wakefield in the Clare Valley have found a formula for success with their medal-winning Wakefield Estate Riesling 2012, Australia.

It is dry, crisp and brimming with orchard fruits, tingling acidity and lovely, lingering aromatics on the lively finish.

Uber citrusy, pungent and very lively, it may come as little surprise that Belmonte Riesling 2010, New Zealand is from the Marlborough region, home to top-notch New World sauvignon blanc.

With similar zippy appeal, it's fruity and pure with honeysuckle aromas and an energetic finish that's more than a match with fusion food.

War on the big screen

A SERIES of new and classic films will be shown in Folkestone, with each one introduced by a guest speaker as part of the National Army Museums Your Country Calls: First World War in Film event.

The film festival takes place from January 23 to 25 at Folkestone Town Hall.

All events and screenings are free but tickets must be booked in advance at www.nam.ac.uk/film-festival

Classic Hollywood tale

SECRET Love, a heart-warming musical celebrating the life and career of Doris Day will come to The Orchard Theatre in Dartford on April 1.

The legend led an extraordinary life, encompassing the big band era, Hollywood stardom, financial disaster and domestic tragedy.

For more information or tickets visit www.orchardtheatre.co.uk

Drama on the shore

A NEW play will explore a slice of British heritage which has suffered in recent years.

The Pier, by Joseph Wilde, who has won the BBC Drama Imison Award will be coming to The Marlowe Studio, Canterbury, on January 22 and 23.

The Pier is at The Marlowe Studio at 8pm. Tickets are £12 and can be purchased from the box office on 01227 787787 or at marlowetheatre.com.

Easy like soft rock

THE Commodores' founder and hit writer will perform with his band at The Woodville, Gravesend, on January 31.

They will perform hits including Brick House, Easy, Nightshift and Three Times a Lady, as well as the new single Mr Cool Breeze.

For tickets and information call the box office on 08442 439 480 or alternatively visit www.woodville.co.uk

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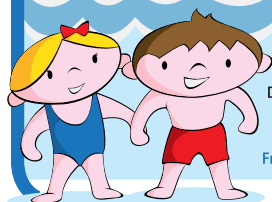
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Paradise found for adults *and* kids

TRAVEL REVIEW: St Lucia

By Josie Clarke

ON ARRIVAL at St James's Club Morgan Bay in St Lucia, after a 90-minute drive from the airport, we have barely stepped out of the taxi before we're handed a rum punch, while the children receive an alcohol-free version and a kid's pack outlining their week ahead with the author Chris Bradford, who is running a series of 'boot camps' based on his bestselling Young Samurai and Bodyguard series.

Bradford is the latest Puffin artist in residence for Elite Island Resorts in the Caribbean, where Rachel Bright, author of *My Sister Is An Alien!* and Curtis Jobling, the original creator of *Bob The Builder*, have also run two-week holiday workshops at some of the group's kids' clubs as part of the all-inclusive package.

Aided by props that include a real samurai sword (which can take a little explaining at customs, I'm told) and a can of cold sweat (don't ask), Bradford has the children literally sprinting to boot camp as soon as they've finished their breakfast.

It's a high-octane, energetic series of mornings that teaches all the essential skills required to become a holiday ninja – silent creeping, self-defence techniques, a dash of origami and the correct pronunciation of *kon-ni-chi-wa* and *sayonara* – amid some great lessons about the importance of perseverance and individuality.

The workshops are punctuated with good old-fashioned storytelling and previews of Bradford's books.

It's all pretty exciting stuff, and while mum and dad are quietly sunning themselves on the beach, it's probably best they don't know that a (highly-controlled and safety assessed) demonstration of the samurai sword, involving holding a piece of



PERFECT PARADISE: There is an abundance of activities for adults and children alike

paper at close quarters, has the resort manager Mark turning slightly pale and walking away with his head in his hands.

All of this is more entertaining than sitting with mum and dad, who are enjoying the sort of blissful peace and relaxation they thought had been relegated to a previous lifetime.

Safe in the knowledge that the children are under the watchful eyes of not only Bradford, but a full comple-

ment of dedicated child carers, we spend our mornings gliding gently between the swim-up bar (it opens well before lunch, which is hardly our fault) and the lovely beach, where there are a vast range of water sports.

There is also a spa, where we narrowly miss out on a "his and hers" treatment, the prospect of which had been causing my husband confusion bordering on distress, due to an overtired toddler who scuppered the deal.

But by this time, we're actually starting to miss the little ones, and it's lovely to collect them for a lunch date at the ever-popular family pool with its bar and grill. We spend almost every lunchtime here, as it enjoys a slightly elevated position on the site where breezes take the edge off the heat of the afternoon and the children make new friends as they play.

But despite the many delights of the resort, there comes a point when the

TRAVEL FACTS

JOSIE Clarke was a guest of Tropical Sky Holidays (www.tropicalsky.co.uk) who offer a seven-night stay at St James Morgan Bay in St Lucia from £1,459 per person.

Puffin workshops scheduled for 2015 include: Rachel Bright at St James's Club Morgan Bay, St Lucia, from September 14-18, 2015; and Adam Stower at St James's Club and Villas Antigua from August 16-20.

sea beckons and we decide to venture out to explore the island.

Joy's Cruises run from the resort's beach and we set off down the coast, headed for the mighty Pitons, which we had tantalisingly glimpsed as we flew in. They are a truly extraordinary sight and capture everyone's attention – until a pod of dolphins appears about a metre from the bow. We slow down and they play a great game of hide and seek as we approach the town of Soufriere, where we leave the boat for a mini bus that takes us to the Sulphur Springs, or the "Caribbean's only drive-in volcano".

It's here that our day's adventure steps up a notch as we slap on mineral-infused mud before sinking into the pleasantly hot sulphuric pools, emerging with beautifully soft skin and smelling like old eggs, before taking a short drive to a waterfall where we swim in its warm waters.

It's a wrench to leave this little piece of paradise, but there's rum punch waiting on the boat. As we cruise out past the headland, the dolphins reappear and we hang about with them for a while, before cutting the engines to dive into the deep blue with both children joining us.

Film Reviews by Damon Smith



Whiplash (15, 106 mins) Drama/Romance

THE fresh paint of 2015 has barely dried and already we have a strong contender for the film of the year.

Inspired by writer-director Damien Chazelle's experiences in a fiercely-competitive high school jazz band, *Whiplash* is an electrify-

ing tale of a 19-year-old drummer's bruising battle of wits with his monstrous college tutor.

As the title intimates, pain is acute in Chazelle's lean script that pulls no punches in its depiction of the pursuit of musical excellence, which propels the self-destructive student to the brink of a mental and physical breakdown.

Our investment in the characters is immense and Chazelle rewards us with an astounding denouement that saps every ounce of energy from our bodies.

Wild (15, 115 mins) Drama

IT'S a perfect paradox.

Sometimes to find yourself, you have to completely lose yourself: strip yourself bare of home comforts, temporarily sever emotional ties and stare your demons in the eye.

Only when you hit rock bottom with an almighty thump can you honestly assess your strengths and frailties.

In 1994, 26-year-old Cheryl Strayed (Reese Witherspoon, right) decided to come to terms with the death of her mother by embarking on a gruelling 1,100-mile solo trek along the Pacific Crest Trail passing through California, Oregon, and Washington.

There are some powerful scenes of threat and self-reflection including a moving encounter on the trail.

American Sniper (15, 132 mins) Thriller/Action/Romance

BORN and raised in Odessa, Texas, Chris Kyle became a professional rodeo rider until injury forced him to reassess his priorities.



He enlisted with the military and his keen eye – nurtured by his father who taught him to hunt at an early age, caught their attention.

During four tours of duty in Iraq, he gained the reputation as the most lethal sniper in American military history with 160 confirmed kills to his name.

When Kyle eventually returned home, deeply scarred by clashes

with insurgents and the deaths of his brothers in arms, he gradually regained his humanity and reconnected with his family by working with veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

"I'm making memories by myself. I have no one to share them with," sobs Kyle's wife Taya.

Kyle's memory is polished to a lustre by Eastwood's film.

THE weather is going to be the telling factor in garden design trends this year, thanks to several years of excessively wet weather and flooding.

So says award-winning garden designer Chris Beardshaw, co-presenter of BBC2's Great Garden Revival.

He is currently planning his forthcoming Healthy Cities show garden with first-time RHS Chelsea Flower Show sponsor Morgan Stanley.

"There's a real awareness of the challenges of the weather," he says.

"We've gone through that period where we thought it was going to get hotter and buying phormiums and cordylines and then finding that the winter killed them.

"People are going back to much more resilient planting types. There's a real resurgence in shrubs.

"The last few decades have been about herbaceous perennials and grasses and I think a lot of people are now much more interested in combinations.

"We often put shrub roses with clematis and an underscore of bulbs to give three hits of interest.

"People are becoming aware that one plant doesn't necessarily cover all bases and are adopting a more refined approach to planting."

Plants such as phillyrea and deciduous rhododendrons, which provide masses of interest through a long season and little maintenance, may become more popular, he predicts.

We are moving away from 'static gardens', low-maintenance, minimalist plots which don't change



CHRIS BEARDSHAW: 'People are going back to much more resilient planting types. There's a real resurgence in shrubs,' says the award-winning designer

Sowing ideas for new trends

through the season and are lacking in personality.

"People want the garden to respond to the seasons - and the plants have to respond to that."

"The bubble of 'grow your own' has burst," he continues.

"After a couple of dodgy weather seasons, most people are now realising that growing fruit and veg is not

as easy as it might seem and, as a consequence, are becoming more selective of what they grow.

"Rhubarb is becoming fantastically popular because it is so easy to grow, along with fruit like damsons and gages, which can be planted as hedging or put in a wild area of the garden and will largely look after themselves.

"Likewise, with vegetables, we will take into account the amount of time and space our choice uses up.

"So things like cut-and-come-again salad leaves, which cost a lot in the shops, will continue to be popular as they are easy to grow and give great rewards."

Gardeners seem to be more savvy than previously, perhaps because of

the wealth of information available on plant sites on the internet, and want more bang for their buck when buying plants, he says.

Mr Beardshaw added: "We are keen to see plants working hard, which is perhaps a symptom of gardens getting smaller.

"We are looking at more high intensity planting."

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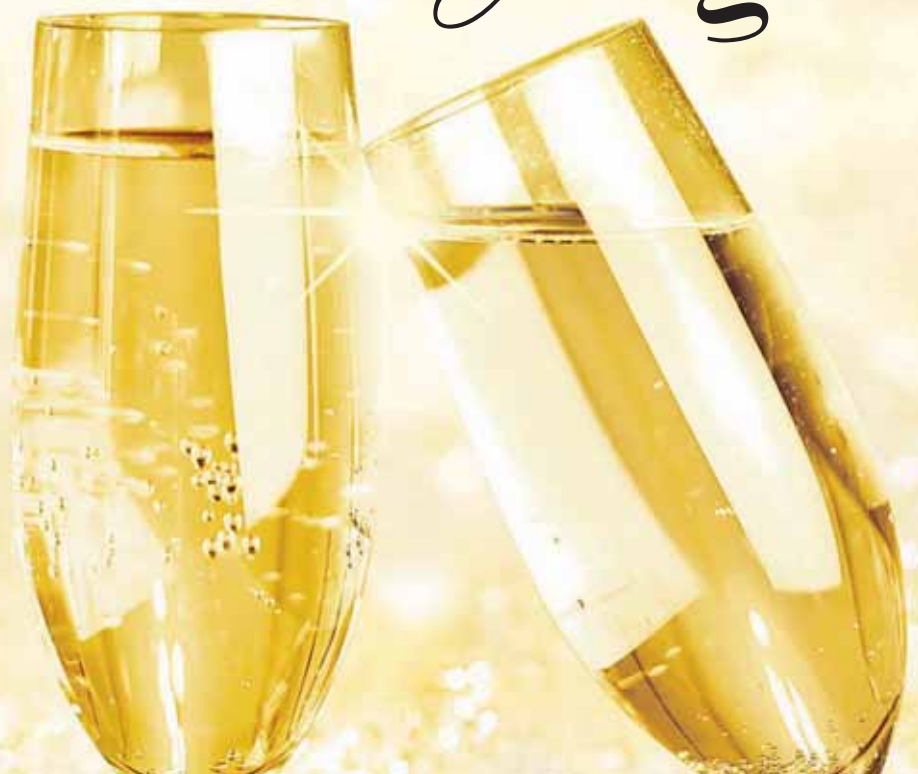
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CAROLINE 60, 5ft 2ins, likes animals, walks, travel, gardening, seeks male. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 402067

SOPHIA young 40yrs, married but bored, seeks discreet adult fun, any area, all calls answered. Tel No: 0905 002 1883 Box No: 413399

59YR old Kent lady, bubbly, large build, dog lover, easy-going, GSOH, seeks male. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 403071

LUCY, 32yrs, blonde lady seeks naughty boys of any age for no strings fun. Tel No: 0905 002 1887 Box No: 413443

JAYNE 44 bored, underappreciated pretty blonde eyed intelligent lady seeking fun and interesting professional in similar situation to me for discreet fun times. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 403011

ADVENTUROUS sexy lady, 39yrs, married but seeks no strings fun with discreet man, any age. I'm tall, slim and dominant. Aca. Tel No: 0905 002 1937 Box No: 415301

LISA blonde, blue eyes, looking for male, 42-54 for fun and romance. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 404877

LUCY, broadminded 18yrs seeks discreet fun with men any age. Aca. Tel No: 0905 002 1941 Box No: 365051

LADY 57, away with the fairies, looking for her wizard and enchantment. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 403093

SEXY brunette, 20's busty, adventurous broad minded seeks no strings fun. Tel No: 0905 002 1949 Box No: 361739

LIZ blonde blue eyed curvy female, considered attractive, tactile, sensual, enjoys music, entertaining, nice people, seeking well educated professional 50-60yrs. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 402773

SALLY, 38yrs large cuddly lady seeks slim men for discreet meetings. Text Only 4550193

JO 29 tall slim female who loves soaps, animals, shopping, being a mum and am looking for 40's male with GSOH who will appreciate a tactile, loving female. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 402765

TRUDY 36yrs, wfm broadminded men of any age/area for day-time meetings. Text Only 4550194

52YR old female, single mum of 2, seeking honest, caring, decent man. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 389891

MELANIE, 38, slim, blonde and bored. Call if you want no strings fun. Text Only 4550198

SLIM N/S female, 54, working, reliable, easy going, likes nature, animals, seeks nice male companion, 50-64 for country/seaside walks and meals out. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 405745

JENNI, 52 bored housewife wants no strings fun with younger chap. Text Only 4550197

JACQUELINE 79 widow, easy going, good listener, not slim or neurotic, OHAC, Sevenoaks, (only would like gentleman's company. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 405533

ATTRACTIVE female, 53, N/S, 5ft 8ins, looking for similar male, 50-55 who loves countryside, animals and is easygoing. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 405421

AMANDA 44 blonde, blue eyed, very leggy, fun to be with, honest and caring, seeking kind, considerate honest gent 74-79 plus. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 405315

SUE 65, slim, animal lover, 5ft, blonde, likes socialising, meals out, theatre, countryside, happy go lucky, seeks male. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 405767

NICKY 45, 5ft 2ins, blue eyes, blonde hair, looking for genuine male for friendship. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 389774

LISA 44, blonde hair, blue eyes, 5ft 6ins, nice personality, trustworthy, kind, likes cinema, nights in, walks, music, seeks male for friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 404751

CLAIRE looking for adventurous male to live life to the max and enjoy adult fun times with. Go on give me a call. Any age. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 402993

GILL 41, shy, lonely single country loving female with no ties, OHAC WLTN n/s genuine, confident male companion for friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 402799

AMANDA 36yr old single female, blue eyes, curvy, really pretty with lovely smile, loves music, nights out, WLTN loving male for dates and hopeful ltr. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 402787

DOG lover short of British slim petite lady to maybe get into 1-2-1 relationship and start something new. Smoker welcome, age immaterial. Tunbridge Wells area. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 404417

COUNTRY loving outgoing female, blue eyes, 5ft 2ins, genuine, caring, intelligent, seeks honourable, smart, professional male, 68-75 to share laughter and companionship. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 392899

SINGLE mum, new to Canterbury, 37, attractive, blonde, seeking soul mate, preferably with a car. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 397751

60YR old black female, sociable, seeks romantic, articulate white male for friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 402523

REBECCA kind, caring, honest, lonely, seeking older gent to wine and dine me. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 402673

DIVORCED female, 66, blue eyes, 5ft 4ins, medium build, blonde hair, seeks male, 65-75 for friendship/companionship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 403275

21YR old slim figured female, no ties, looking for male 30-45yrs for non committed relationship, discretion assured. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 402761

CHRIS petite attractive brunette, enjoys social drinks, meals out, theatre, seeks hardworking professional male looking for adult attention too. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 402759

5FT female, brown hair, 39, single mum, seeks caring, dedicated guy. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 397915

MALE 48, 5ft 10ins, medium build, likes gardening, cinema, reading, WLTN lady. Thanet area. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 404295

48YR old female, kind, loving, caring, genuine, fun loving, loves music, singing, theatre, holidays, seeks male. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 387797

LYN happy, young looking 72yr old, seeking interesting man, 65 plus to enjoy life with. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 403101

GEORGINA widow, WLTN gent, 60-80 with GSOH for days out, friendship, companionship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 393067

SHIRLEY 32 attractive nurse, enjoys good food/wine, keeping fit, looking good, searching for non committed relations with mature well-dressed man. Any age/looks/status. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 402779

SLIM tall, elegant, feminine, N/S, solvent lady, young 50's, likes travel, red wine, seeks tall, sincere, Military/professional gent of high calibre. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 405707

FEMALE seeks Prince Charming, 20-30 to sweep her off her feet. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 392891

ANNA very lonely divorced single mum with lots of love to give seeks similar caring male who also wants to find the right person, any age/looks. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 403481

Men Seeking

REMEMBER: Calls cost £1.53 per minute plus network extras.

mydate24

DISCREET kind man, 48, gentle, loving, genuine, seeking lady, Whitstable. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 406439

JAMES, hard working single dad, late 30's seeks single mum for family days out. Text Only 4055096

RICHARD divorced, 61, N/S, likes classic cars, looking to meet nice lady for meals out, days out, friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 406349

JOHN, 42yrs professional genuine seeks caring lady to treat as a princess. Text Only 4550195

BRIAN 6ft 3ins, medium build, blue eyes, brown hair, fun loving, happy go lucky, honest, seeks special lady for fun and to enjoy life with. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 406333

BLACK male, looking for 1-2-1 relationship with laid back, understanding female. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 406221

MEDWAY male, 60's, solvent, seeks attractive lady, 55-65, GSOH to wine, dine and share the good times. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 405429

OUTGOING professional, fun loving, entertaining male, seeking warm, sincere, fun loving female for LTR. Animals/children welcome. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 405633

35YR old male, 6ft, dark hair, easy going, likes music, films, reading, walks, looking for female for LTR. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 405941

70YRS young male, good looking, GSOH, seeking lady for love and affection. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 404345

MIKE 39, 6ft 7ins, large build, blue eyes, seeks female. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 406321

RONALD 65 plus, 5ft 9ins, slim, sociable, GSOH, tactile, N/S, many interests, seeking lady dance partner to learn ballroom and Latin. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 403211

STEVE 64, active, likes fishing, swimming, karaoke, honest, genuine, seeks female. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 405717

CANTERBURY sign language interpreter 58, 5ft 10ins, medium build, GSOH, varied interests, seeks slim-medium build female, 21-42 for LTR. Single mum welcome. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 405697

TALL friendly, light hearted, single, 58, seeks pretty woman for LTR with mutual selection of activities and choosing how to spend our time. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 405557

RETIRED male 68, 5ft 8ins, considerate, GSOH, easy-going, likes driving, shopping, most music, seeking lady 60-70 for friendship. Ashford. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 404589

YOUNG 70 widower, fit, lonely, 5ft 11ins, 11st, likes drives, walks, DIY, meals out, gardening, smoker, looking for lady to spend life with. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 405519

ACTIVE 60's semi-retired man, OHAC, GSOH, enjoys theatre, singing, amateur dramatics, coast, gardening etc., WLTN n/s female with similar interests. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 404671

47YR old female, fun loving, green eyes, likes most things, seeks N/S male, 47-52 with GSOH for nights out, friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 401287

DELILAH 49, likes animals, blonde, blue eyes, seeking older gent, late 70's who is kind and willing to care about me. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 403769

SUSIE young 55, slim, 5ft 3ins, seeks tall, honest guy from Medway towns. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 389027

LISA 5ft 2ins, 43, average build plus a few pounds, blonde hair, blue eyes, looking for man for dates. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 401421

LINDA young 62, smoker, seeking gent, 55-65 for friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 400521

VIC mid 60's medium build male, active, N/S, likes countryside, DIY, seeks compatible female. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 405085

CHRIS from Folkestone, 68yrs young widower, N/S, 5ft 9ins, OHAC, likes country music, rock n' roll, WLTN N/S female with similar interests. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 405079

CHRIS 68, 5ft 9ins, 13st, frustrated widower, likes country/western music, real ale, gardening, cruises, looking for companionship. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 402271

40 something Gemini 5ft 10ins, slim, GSOH, varied outdoor interests, seeks similar outgoing female, 30-45 for dates and LTR. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 404535

TED 63, 5ft 7ins, average build, seeks female 55-75 for friendship, possible LTR. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 401913

PROFESSIONAL male, early 40's, OHAC, independent, seeks warm, sincere, fun loving female for LTR. Children/animals welcome. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 404537

THANET male, young mid 60's, caring, 5ft 5ins, dark hair, likes travel, countryside, seeks slim, attractive local soul mate. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 403729

MICHAEL 44, likes CD, films, seeks older male 55 plus for fun times in the Thanet area. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 404373

PAUL 49 5ft 8ins likes eating/nights in/out seeks loving female for ltr. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 404013

DENNIS 53yrs retired police officer living in Kent, WLTN female for mutual fun times. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 404201



GARDENER 50, flt, honest, happy, single, fit gardener seeks attractive younger lady for fun NSA nights in, weekends away, country walks, picnics and good conversation. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 404115

SALVATORE 68, N/S, widow, Italian, seeking female for friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 402481

KEVIN 49, single dad, employed, good cook/laugh, seeks female for fun and good times. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 402405

BLACK male, 50, bubbly personality, seeks buxom, pear shaped, rubinesque white female, 25-55 for friendship, possible LTR. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 402887

GENUINE fun loving guy 55, medium build, blue eyes, seeks genuine lady, 45-57 for fun times, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 401761

GRAHAM 52, N/S, likes days out, antique fairs, animals, seeks slim, attractive, N/S lady, 40-50 for LTR. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 401727

BUILDER 43, tall, good looking, kind, considerate, easy-going, seeks female. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 401595

BLACK British male, African descent, medium build, varied interests, understanding, seeks female. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 402641

BUILDER 43, tall, good looking, kind, considerate, easy-going, seeks female. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 402531

YOUNG mixed race male, seeking female for no strings fun. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 402499

AARON 35, no ties, 5ft 9ins, clean shaven, attractive, Italian background, chef, down to earth, open minded, likes meals out, weekends away, socialising, cinema, seeks female. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 402497

TALL 64yr old young at heart N/S male, widower, seeking female for friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 401531

CHRIS 58, 5ft 9ins, 13st, frustrated widower, likes country/western music, real ale, gardening, cruises, looking for companionship. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 402271

ANDY 36, sexy, fun, come say hello. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 402903

EDDIE African male, seeking female, 20-40 for LTR. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 394354

ROBERT medium build, single, seeks nice, attractive, busty female with sexy clothes. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 402597

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Education 2015 Advertisers' Announcements...



KENT COLLEGE PEMBURY: Provides an outstanding and nurturing education

Kent College Pembury

KENT College Pembury is a leading HMC independent day and boarding school for girls aged 3-18, set in an idyllic rural site, the school is well-known for providing an outstanding and nurturing education with success achieved both academically and across the curriculum.

An extensive and exciting enrichment programme ensures that day girls and boarders immerse themselves in new opportunities from Saturday mornings at the thriving Theatre Academy to afterschool fencing and lunch-time scuba-diving.

And 2015 looks to be an exciting year ahead for the thriving day and boarding school for girls aged 3 – 18.

This year, the school looks forward to the opening of their state-of-the-art multi-purpose sports hall as part of the School's Fit for Life campaign ensuring that all girls

benefit from this fantastic new facility.

In February, March and May the school will be holding its annual open mornings, which prove a great opportunity for families to meet staff and pupils, hear about the fantastic enrichment programme and flexi-boarding service and take tours across the extensive school site.

■ Preparatory School open morning: Wednesday, February 4, from 9.30am to 11.30am.

■ Early Years open morning: Tuesday, March 17, from 9.30am to 1.30am.

■ Senior School open morning: Tuesday March 10, and Wednesday, May 6, from 9.15am to 1.00pm (head's presentation at 10.00am).

Book either online at www.kent-college.co.uk or by calling Admissions on 01892 820218.

DOVER ATHLETIC FC AND THE ABBEY SCHOOL 6TH FORM



TRIALS: Football academy trials are being held on Friday, February 20, at 10.30am

DOVER Athletic Football Club in partnership with The Abbey School 6th Form – A Business & Enterprise Academy – are holding football academy trials on Friday, February 20, at 10.30am.

■ The Football Academy represents Dover Athletic FC in the Conference Youth league, the highest league outside of professional football.

■ Football coaching from UEFA 'A' licensed coaches.

■ State of the art 3G pitch.

■ Unique opportunity to study a range of courses alongside football commitments

100% pass rate in A Level and BTEC courses.

■ Opportunity to take additional Coaching and Fitness Instructor courses American Scholarship opportunities.

■ Travel grants available to qualifying students.

■ Opportunity to progress to the DAFC first team.

■ If you are interested in attending the trials please email: msandmann@abbeyschool-faversham.co.uk or call the school on 01795 532633.

Contact the school at: The Abbey School, London Road, Faversham, ME13 8RZ.

THE ROCHESTER GRAMMAR SCHOOL



ROCHESTER GRAMMAR SCHOOL: The only Medway school in the Top 30 State schools

ROCHESTER Grammar School: The only Medway school in the Top 30 State schools.

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Transforming Life Chances

Sixth form open evening Wednesday, January 21, at 6.00pm.

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(Sixth form leaver now studying at Cambridge University)

For further information, please contact:

The Rochester Grammar School,

Maidstone Road, Kent ME1 3BY

Tel: (01634) 843049

Email: office@rochestergrammar.org.uk

Kent College Canterbury

CANTERBURY has been voted one of the best places to live in the South East by The Sunday Times.

One of the twelve reasons given for Canterbury's success in the poll is the calibre of its schools: Kent College, Canterbury being one of the strongest contenders.

Academically, Kent College has been rated in the top 25% of schools nationally for the value added that it achieves for all of its pupils.

The school is now world renowned for its academic reputation, offering the International Baccalaureate alongside A levels.

It prides itself as being in the top 10 schools nationally for the IB with average points of 37.4, and its A-level results place it in the top 100 schools of its kind in the country, as it regularly achieves 100% GCSE pass rate.

These results alone are praiseworthy but it is all the acclaim that the school achieves alongside fantastic academic results that make it truly remarkable.

Every one of the accomplishments that follow has taken place in the last twelve months.

In the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) arena, Head Girl, Eva Harris, won a national competition run by the Physiology Society; our Year 9 team were finalists at the Big Bang Science and Engineering Competition; no fewer than 9 students received Gold level in the UK Maths Challenge; the Year 10 Maths Team won the regional round of the Further Maths Support Programme and not to

be left out, the Year 11 team won the Gold Crest Award for their Engineering project.

The school's young choristers are hard at work practising for their performances in the finals of BBC Songs of Praise Choir of the Year and Barnardo's National Choir of the Year.

No fewer than three of our students have been selected for the prestigious Canterbury Cathedral Girls' Choir.

On the sports field, Lizzie Neal has won the Higgins Trust U16 National Youth Award for Hockey; the U18 Girls are National Indoor Hockey Finalists as well as being County Champions in the outdoor game; seven players have been selected during the year to

play hockey at National level; the Watton sisters have competed in the Scottish Open Tennis Tournament; three of our athletes represented the County at the National Cross-Country competition at Donington Park; one of our young horse-riders has qualified for the National Schools' Competition and finally, one of our skiers won medals in all three disciplines at the British Ski Racing event.

The student led Charities Committee raised a phenomenal £8,000 last term. All of this does not happen by chance, it happens because the children are empowered with a sense of self-worth and encouraged to participate and excel both in and outside the classroom.

Kent College is very proud to be part of the thriving City of Canterbury community!

www.kentcollege.com

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Please include your name and address, although these will be withheld in exceptional circumstances, and a daytime phone number for verification (this will not be published). We reserve the right to edit all letters.

High price of all those rail delays

THE other day I was stuck on a train at Sevenoaks station, with hundreds of other passengers to London, awaiting the arrival of a driver from an incoming train.

When I tried to calculate the loss of 15 minutes time to each passenger it very soon dawned on me how much the cumulative losses from such delays are worth every day.

What compounded the situation was the contradictory messages given over the tannoy for this delay, an all too often occurrence.

With the likely disruption expected from the new timetable for the London Bridge upgrade, it is surely even more vital to keep travellers fully informed, both through platform and on-train announcements, websites, Twitter, and other social media.

Dr Alan Bullion
 Lib Dem Parliamentary
 spokesman for Sevenoaks

Protecting our freedoms

MANY are of the opinion that freedom to choose is a precious gift from God.

All through the generations freedom has had to be defended and countless lives have been lost in that battle.

Freedom of speech must be upheld and defended within the law.

If taken beyond the law, that freedom is in danger of becoming licence.

Therefore, is not wisdom required to intercede between freedom and licence?

Who these days are trying to obtain and administer wisdom?

June Moore,
 Tunbridge Wells

Threat posed to our hospitals

STATISTICS this week have shown that A&E departments up and down the country are in crisis.

Unfortunately, east Kent hospitals are no exception.

The most up-to-date statistics show that 13.9 per cent of patients waited more than four hours in A&E, which is well below the target of five per cent.

A Care Quality Commission report in August last year further highlighted the problem. It branded east Kent hospitals inadequate, with one of the major causes for concern being a chronic over-reliance on locum staff and over-time in the A&E department at the QEOM.

Labour identified this issue in 2013 and started a campaign calling on management to intervene.

We were told that it wasn't a concern, but unfortunately this

LETTER OF THE WEEK



Tesco pull-out is a justification of fears

AS A FORMER resident of Dartford and a local councillor, the news that Tesco have now decided that they are not going ahead with their plans to build a superstore in Dartford is vindication for myself and many others who spent more than ten years campaigning against what we could see as the destruction of Dartford.

I am sure that Jeremy Kite [council leader] along with all the other Conservative and Labour councillors will now try and blame Tesco for turning Dartford into one of the worst towns in the country and certainly the most neglected and run down town in Kent.

If I could very briefly remind local residents of some of the highlights of this fiasco.

The idea to have a Tesco superstore in the town was the brainchild of a Labour council and the original plan was for a road through Central Park leading into the largest Tesco to be built anywhere in the country.

Despite 20,000 residents objecting to these proposals, the by now Conservative council ignored the views of these people.

To their credit, the Labour council, now in opposition, opposed the road through the park and with the help of the then

Labour MP, Howard Stoate, had a public enquiry which ultimately rejected the entire proposal. This did not stop the council or Tesco in their desire to impose this very large store onto the town and subsequent applications were submitted.

All met with a great deal of opposition.

In the meantime land was sold to Tesco. Individual businesses were destroyed. Habitable homes were boarded up.

I well remember asking Cllr Kite "what is Plan B?", and he replied there is no Plan B, we know what we want.

The question now is what next? Lowfield Street has been a dump for more than ten years, I suspect that it will be another 20 years before you see any improvement.

With elections in May I just hope the residents have the good sense to kick these dismal failures out of office once and for all and elect people who, and will, offer Dartford a new beginning.

Mike Tibby
 Herne Bay

Read more about Tesco's decision and the Dartford reaction inside this edition of Kent on Sunday

after the Tories' failed reorganisation.

Will Scobie
 Labour's parliamentary candidate
 for South Thanet

Cuts sparked the A&E crisis

THE crisis in A&E is the predictable consequence of bed cuts and casualty closures elsewhere.

Demand is not significantly higher than expected but capacity and staffing levels have dropped.

The NHS has been weakened by yet another major reorganisation diverting money and energy away from delivering care.

My sick patients requiring admission, report long trolley waits in corridors without monitoring, others discharged prematurely by pressurised doctors desperate to vacate beds. Hospital colleagues are frustrated by the lack of resources to care for patients well.

The environment in acute medical settings is becoming unsafe. Despite the obvious need for greater funding, more cuts and closures are underway across London. Both patients and staff are paying a heavy price for ideological driven NHS privatisation.

Responsibility for crisis lies squarely at the door of government. Bad headlines will be cynically spun to justify more of the same. Attack the NHS system; blame the public for being irresponsible in their use of the service; blame GPs for not being accessible.

Our politicians have made the wrong diagnosis and continue to administer the NHS a toxic medicine.

We must not let them get away with this deception or the betrayal of the public interest.

Dr Bob Gill
 National Health Action Party
 Candidate for Old Bexley and Sidcup

Mayor's thanks for Toy Appeal

I WAS absolutely overwhelmed by your kindness in supporting my Toy Appeal, and for all your hard work in so many ways to ensure that so many needy children had a Christmas to remember.

Thank you so much.

It is an enormous tribute to you personally and to us as a community that we have been able to once again produce such a wonderful outcome for those most in need in this borough.

It is impossible to thank everybody involved individually but you will know what part you played and I cannot thank you enough for your time and generosity at such a busy time of year.

I must give a special mention to: Pam Bridges and her team who sort the gifts and make sure each child receives a soft toy, a book and an activity toy appropriate for their age – without Pam's experience, organisational skills, dedication and leadership the appeal would not be possible, the St George's team; Town Hall staff, The Big Yellow Self Storage Company and all the collection points and giving trees. As well as one anonymous gentleman who contributes £500 each year.

Without you the Toy Appeal would not be possible. Thank you for thinking of others and supporting the Toy Appeal in 2014

Julian Stanyer
 Mayor, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council



Ramsgate Harbour

by **Peter Banks from Whitstable**

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CHALLENGE: Nissan's luxury arm takes aim at BMW 5 Series, Audi A6 and Mercedes-Benz E-Class with this revitalised model



Nissan drives into German territory with Infiniti boost

IF NISSAN prestige brand, Infiniti, is to win over UK hearts and minds then it must learn from German premium stars BMW, Audi and Mercedes-Benz.

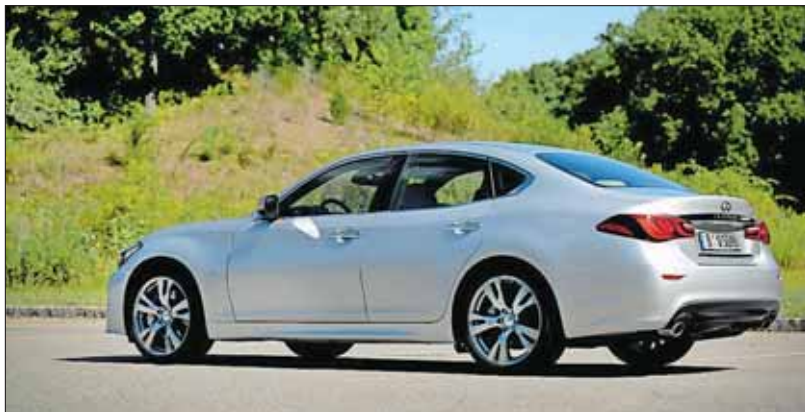
And it has certainly picked up on one ruse; facelift an existing model and re-market it as a 'new generation' vehicle.

In Infiniti's case, this means we are now seeing a heavily revised version of its 2010-vintage mid-range M model - a rival to the aforementioned German trio's 5 Series, A6 and E-Class respectively.

Now called the Q70, bringing it into line with the marque's smaller Q50 3 Series wannabe, it does actually represent quite a change from the M model.

Starting at an attractive £32,650 with a hefty range of standard kit - a key part of the Infiniti sales pitch - the car is now more in line with current Infiniti styling, and gains efficient LED lights as standard, plus rear-view camera, front and rear parking sensors, Infiniti's 'Connectivity' infotainment and navigation system, 18-inch wheels, and leather seats with ventilation.

But the biggest change to the new look line-up is the arrival of a punchy yet more eco-friendly (129g/km of CO2) four-cylinder 2.2-litre diesel replacing the old V6 diesel.



This new entry level unit is expected to be the runaway best seller, giving Infiniti much-needed clout in the company car 'user chooser' market and has been produced in conjunction with Mercedes-Benz parent, Daimler - one can only presume that the German brand is unconcerned about possible effects on E-Class sales.

The engine is partnered with a standard seven-speed automatic 'box more in line with what the opposition offers, and some versions come with sporty F1 gearchange paddles on the steering wheel.

Infiniti also has high hopes for the more aggressive looking 2.2 Sport (£35,850) variant with uprated brakes and 20-inch wheels.

Cactus stands proud without the prickles

Citroen's Cactus may look a little odd with its padded doors, but it stands alone in what is currently a deserted market sector - cheap to buy and run yet spacious too

CACTUS is a great name for Citroën's latest and most eye-catching model for a while.

I've quoted the Renault Captur as its best rival but, fact is, the Citroën stands out like a cactus in the desert - as nothing comes close in style or purpose.

It also survives on little (fuel that is) and can look after itself, not with spines, but good protection - notably the unique 'Airbump' polyurethane side panels, interchangeable if you fancy a new look later.

In short, it's probably the French marque's most innovative car since the legendary 2CV, echoing it through low price and running costs, space and unique styling.

Much of the car's economy comes from lightness; the car weighs around 200kg - the weight of at least two average men - less than equivalent C4 hatchback models.

This allows the car to ride lightly on a standard steel suspension that keeps costs down, but feels smooth in the tradition of Citroën's famous hydro-pneumatic system.

The down side is some leaning on corners, but you tend to forgive this for the supple ride, and also because none of the engines are intended for



SPACIOUS: It may prove a Marmite car, but there's no denying the Cactus is worth a look

'sporty driving' - this is more a car to deliver interest, image and internal space for very little outlay.

Apart from those eye-catching air bumps - which I would have extended to the rear edge of the back doors to avoid damage to neighbouring cars in car parks - the car's front

end is also futuristic, and I recommend the optional panoramic sunroof (£395) to add to the cabin's airiness, though there is no sun-blind.

The passenger airbag has been cleverly re-located into the roof - perhaps triggering an industry trend -

in order to solve 'the case of the disappearing glovebox' ie the glovebox lid or cover that disguises something so small it cannot even hold gloves let alone other stuff we would prefer to hide safely.

The Cactus glovebox, by contrast, is generous with a second USB

Citroen C4 Cactus

Flair Blue HDi 100

Price: **from £17,990**

Driving appeal: **★★★**

Image: **★★★★★**

Space: **★★★★★**

Value: **★★★★★**

Running costs: **★★★★★**

How green?: **★★★★★**

Best rival: **Renault Captur**

connector.

I have to mark down the lack of split folding rear seats though; presumably this was a weight saver, but could be a deal breaker for some.

It's a shame because the Cactus has a cavernous 358-litre boot - far better than any family hatchback - and an ultimate (seats folded) capacity of 1,170.

Engine-wise, check out the advanced turbocharged three-cylinder Puretech petrol units; they are economical but punchy when needed and cheap to buy, and impressed most when I drove various models at the Cactus launch.

By contrast, the 1.6-litre diesel test car not only seems expensive, but feels more wallowing on the bends, no doubt due to the heavier engine adding the weight of 1-2 more passengers.

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Part time Hours: 20 per week Salary: £8.45 per hour Closing date: 23/01/2015

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- Maths and English GCSE A – C Grade • NVQ 2 or equivalent in relevant studies
- Previous experience in Endoscopy

To discuss this opportunity, or to arrange an informal visit, please contact: Linda McCafferty, Theatre Liaison Manager on 07813459414

Audio Typist – Margate

Full time Hours: 37.5 per week Salary: £17,597.25 Closing date: 23/01/2015

Qualifications and Experience

- Maths and English GCSE A – C Grade • 2 years working in a medical environment
- Audio Typing • Excellent IT Skills (Word, Excel, Booking systems)

To discuss this opportunity, or to arrange an informal visit, please contact: Julie Pain, Administration Supervisor on 01843 234558

For a job description and application form please visit www.spencerprivatehospitals.com/careers

Alternatively, please contact Jo Wright, Senior HR Assistant

Telephone: 01304 245961 E-mail: recruitment@spencerhospitals.com

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PLANNING



THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE) (ENGLAND) ORDER 2010

The following applications have been submitted for consideration by the Council:

Y15/0014/SH+ - 75 High Street Hythe Kent CT21 5JQ - Display of a non-illuminated wall mounted sign and projecting sign.

Y15/0003/SH# - 1 Nelson Villas North Street New Romney Kent TN28 8DW - Erection of a first floor rear extension together with other external alterations.

Y15/0002/SH - Spade House Radnor Cliff Crescent Folkestone Kent CT20 2JQ - Retrospective application for various pruning works to five Sycamores and a Holm Oak tree all subject of Tree Preservation Order No. 6 of 2000

Y15/0015/SH+ - 75 High Street Hythe Kent CT21 5JQ - Listed building consent for the display of a non-illuminated wall mounted sign and projecting sign, and other replacement signage.

Representations can be made in writing either on line on the Council's website, by email to planning@shepway.gov.uk or in writing to the Head of Planning and Environmental Health, Shepway District Council, Civic Centre, Castle Hill Avenue, Folkestone, Kent, CT20 2QY. Please always quote the application reference number. Comments should be made in writing within 21 days from the date of publication. Please note that any representations received will be publically viewable on the Council's website.

Some applications can be viewed at other locations in addition to the Civic Centre, Folkestone. The applications are marked as follows:

- The One Stop Shop, Magpies, Church Approach, New Romney

+ - Hythe Town Council Offices, Stade Street, Hythe

The applications marked (*) do not accord with the provisions of the development plan in force in the area in which the land to which the application relates is situated.

Note: This is not a full list of applications received. All planning applications can be viewed and comments made online at <http://searchplanapps.shepway.gov.uk/online-applications/>.

C Lewis, Head of Planning and Environmental Health
Shepway District Council



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Salary pro-rata – Term Time Only

Wednesday & Thursday 1300 to 2330

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School Nurse

Salary: £24,00 pa – Full Time – Term Time Only

Monday to Friday 08.30 to 17.00

Suitable applicants will be Register General Nurse or have a Specialist Community Public Health (School Nurse) qualification. Knowledge and experience of providing first aid and healthcare needs for the children. Experience with caring for children with chronic illness will be advantageous.

Teaching Assistant

Salary: £12,973 pa – Full Time – Term Time Only

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Supporting students individually and/or in groups with their academic, personal and social development. This role can be demanding and challenging but very rewarding. The School works towards helping students develop life skills and enjoy social activities. Previous experience and working in a SEN school is preferred but not essential. The School has approval status from the DfE and has an excellent rapport with both parents and the Local Authorities.

The School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young adults. Successful candidates will be subject to an Enhanced DBS check.

Application and JD can be found on the web-site www.westheathschool.com

Contact lynn.mcgrath@westheathschool.com

or tel: 01732 460 553 if you have any questions

Closing date for applications is 21st January 2015



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It's jobs for Kent

Gills still looking for new manager

A number of team bosses rumoured to be in running for post

PAUL SCALLY: Looking for someone with fresh new ideas



Football

By Jamie Weir

jamie.weir@archant.co.uk

GILLINGHAM are still hunting for a new manager after Peter Taylor's departure – with interviews for the job continuing this week.

Among those in the running for the post are the likes of Justin Edinburgh, Neal Ardley and James Beattie, with the bookmakers even offering odds on the likes of Arsenal legend and popular pundit Ian Wright and Dover boss Chris Kinnear.

In an open letter to the club's fans this week, Scally said that he had asked the senior coaches to form a 'mini management team' to work together to prepare the side as it seeks League One survival.

He said: "Given I was somewhat

caught unprepared for a managerial change, the process of receiving, evaluating, considering and acting upon CVs began immediately and I am flattered to have received many applications from a cross section of footballing individuals, many of whom would be suitable for the role, have various degrees of experience and are of various character.

"I have spoken to many, have carried out background checks and taken references and have spoken to a number of influential managers and individuals in the game about various candidates.

"I understand in such situations speculation can run rife, especially on forums, and indeed I have seen 'bookies favourites' mentioned, most, if not all of whom I have neither considered or in some cases don't even know. I would therefore urge you all to be cautious before you waste your

money on speculation, as at this stage I have no idea myself who the new manager at GFC will be, and I'd probably have a good idea before the bookies."

Former Spurs and current Newport County boss Justin Edinburgh is thought to be high on that list.

Former Accrington Stanley player-manager and ex-England striker Beattie told the BBC he wanted the job, but may not have the experience Scally is looking for.

Neal Ardley, currently with AFC Wimbledon, is a more likely candidate if a deal to free him from his existing contract could be reached.

Long shots – and likely only to result in you losing your money, are Ian Wright, with Sky Bet offering odds of 33/1, former Gills striker, Danny Kedwell stands a 50/1 chance, while Chris Kinnear is at equally long odds.

Whites go shopping to boost midfield options

DOVER Athletic manager Chris Kinnear has had his first chance to splash some of the club's FA Cup takings, with two new signings to bolster the Whites midfield.

The team have taken advantage of the transfer window to pick up midfield duo Solomon Taiwo and Adam Mekki in the Whites' first spending spree since getting knocked out of the FA Cup. They reached the third round before losing to Premier League Crystal Palace in front of the TV cameras.

The duo have signed deals keeping them at the Crabble until the end of the season, but the club says there is a view to extending the contracts for a further year.

Kinnear told KoS that he was hoping to build up the squad with the money the team made in their



KINNEAR: Making the most of the Whites FA Cup cash boost

high profile cup run.

He said: "We're looking to strengthen the squad, and pump

money into some new players. The cash we got during the FA Cup has given us a number of options which I hope will help push us further."

Mekki joins from rival Conference team Barnet. The 23-year-old winger has signed with the Whites hoping for more first team play.

The promising young player was named as a Wales U21 standby in 2012, and now wants to get on the field more regularly.

Taiwo has already spent time at Dover, initially joining the club on loan from League Two Luton Town in September 2014.

Kinnear will be hoping both players perform to help further swell the club's coffers as the Whites continue their FA Trophy campaign, going into the third round against Woking next weekend.

Blues take advantage of transfer window

MARGATE FC have strengthened their front row, snapping up former Colchester, Kidderminster and Grays Athletic striker Freddie Ladapo.

Ladapo has found the back of the net on 14 separate occasions so far this season, playing for Ryman Premier League side Grays Athletic. He joined Grays on loan from Vanarama Conference Premier side Kidderminster last summer.

After a poor festive period, Blues manager Terry Brown said how happy he was to have picked up the young goalscorer.

He said: "It was really important that we strengthened the side having had a disappointing December. I just wanted to shake up the squad.

"Freddie caused us no end of problems both home and away and caused our centre halves trouble.

"He is a very talented boy who scored lots of goals for Colchester U21's before moving to Kidderminster and then scoring 14 goals so far this season for Grays."



LADAPO: Will be looking to grab some goals at Hartsdown Park



ANDY SMITH: The Mos skipper has fired in 1,000 points for the club

Dynamos winning streak comes to end

INVICTA Dynamos saw their run of 14 wins come to an end, after their first league defeat since October.

The Mos lost 5-4 in the NIHL South Division 1 to the Bracknell Hornets at their Gillingham Silver Blades stadium.

The match had started with both players and fans in high spirits after a standing ovation for captain and forward Andy Smith.

He was saluted for having scored his landmark 1,000th point for the Mos during his team's comfortable 6-2 win away against the Streatham

Redskins the previous day.

But it was downhill from there as the Mos became frustrated and allowed ill discipline to pour on to the ice.

As penalty minutes added up, the Mos found themselves unable to combat a well executed game plan - despite Smith adding to his impressive tally.

Despite missing out on the maximum points, the Mos kept their place at the top of the league, sitting two points clear of their next closest rival.

Luzon takes over at the Addicks

CHARLTON Athletic have announced former Standard Liege boss Guy Luzon will become the team's new manager.

The 39-year-old, signed the deal this week which will see him at The Valley until the end of next season.

He took charge of the Addicks for the first time in yesterday's away clash against Watford.

The announcement that Luzon had been appointed came just days after Addicks' manager Bob Peeters was given the boot for 'poor performance'.

Speaking after his appointment, Luzon said the squad had talented players and that he looked forward to trying to get the best out of them.

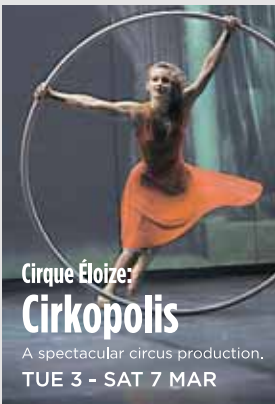
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